Tuesday, April 21, 2026 No 110 ₹7

DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

Tilak's ton helps MI trounce GT

Page 15

Agency says Mohammed, Omar main beneficiaries of scam

ED raids Congress MLA Haris' sons in Bitcoin case

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday launched simultaneous raids against the sons of Karnataka Congress MLA NA Haris — Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad—and Bitcoin case prime accused Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki.

The ED alleged that Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad were close associates of Sriki and were the main beneficiaries of crime proceeds.

The raids were conducted at 12 locations across the state, primarily in Bengaluru.

The multi-crore Bitcon scam came to the fore after Sriki's arrest in November 2020 in a case related to buying hydro ganja using Bitcoins. It was found that Sriki allegedly hacked into online poker sites and crypto exchanges in 2016-17. The state government formed the SIT in 2023 to investigate the case.

On Monday morning, a team of ED officials, along with security personnel, landed at the Nalapad House on Magrath Road. Haris is currently the MLA of Shantinagar in central Bengaluru.

"Investigation under PMLA, 2002, revealed that Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad are close associates of Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki and are main beneficiaries of proceeds of crime," sources from the ED's Delhi unit said.

The search also covered Aqeeb Khan, the grandson of ex-Union Minister K Rahman Khan and nephew of Congress leader Mansoor Ali Khan. ED also claimed Aqeeb was another direct beneficiary of the crime proceeds.

According to sources, the investigations revealed a well-structured modus operandi. This includes hacking websites and cryptocurrency wallets to steal virtual digital assets, siphoning off data and funds, and selling stolen crypto assets through trading platforms to obscure the money trail.

Another report, Page 5

TIMELINE OF HIGH-PROFILE CASE

- **2016-17** Sriki hacks crypto exchanges Bitfinex and Unocoin
- **July 2019** Hacks e-procurement portal of the Karnataka govt
- **Nov 2020** Bengaluru police's CCB arrest Sriki in a dark-net drug case
- **Jan 2021** CCB claims to have recovered 31 Bitcoins worth Rs 9 crore from Sriki, which later 'disappeared'
- **June 2023** Karnataka Congress govt sets up SIT to investigate
- **July 2024** Sriki, associate gets bail; Karnataka HC quashes KCOCA
- **May 2024** SIT arrests Sriki, associate in the 2017 Unocoin case, slapped with KCOCA
- **October 2025** SIT files a chargesheet against Sriki in the PokerBaazi hack case

Security personnel outside Shantinagar MLA N A Haris' house in Bengaluru on Monday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Mohammed Haris Nalapad

Omar Farook Nalapad

Priyank slams ED raids

Information Technology Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday slammed the ED for raiding lawmaker N A Haris' sons in the Bitcoin scam. "If this is related to the Bitcoin scam, then big names should have been raided," Priyank said. "The then home minister and those in power...the BJP government, said nothing happened," he said.

Details on Page 5

Sri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka

Bengaluru City Corporations
•North •South •East •West •Central

Sri D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Govt. of Karnataka

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Chief Commissioner
Greater Bengaluru Authority

No damage to Cong if Zameer leaves, say its Muslim leaders

Seek 'strictest action' on those involved in 'anti-party activities'

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Congress' Muslim office-bearers on Monday asked their party high command to initiate sweeping action against "all those responsible" for trying to sabotage the party's election effort during the April 9 Davangere South bypoll.

This outrage was widely seen as directed towards Housing Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan, who has been accused of abdicating his responsibility of helping the party during the bypoll.

In a joint statement, Karnataka Congress vice-presidents Obaidullah Shariff, Y Sayeed Ahmed, Guarantee Implementation Authority vice-chairperson Mehroz Khan and others pressed for "the strictest possible action" against those who indulged in 'anti-party activities'.

Asked about allegations against Zameer, Shariff said, "The high command, the chief minister and the deputy CM have all the information. We have said that whoever is guilty, irrespective of position, must face action".

Ahmed said the party is discussing about fixing responsibility and accountability.

"There was a campaign urging Muslims not to vote for Congress. All those who were involved in this must face action," he said.

Shariff said Congress office-bearers "who are followers of one particular person" did not show up for election work.

On speculation that Zameer may return to JD(S) and that his exit would damage Congress, Shariff said: "C M Ibrahim left the party. Roshan Baig left the party. What happened? Nothing". Ahmed said new leaders would emerge.

In their written statement, the leaders said "certain individuals" indulged in anti-party activities.

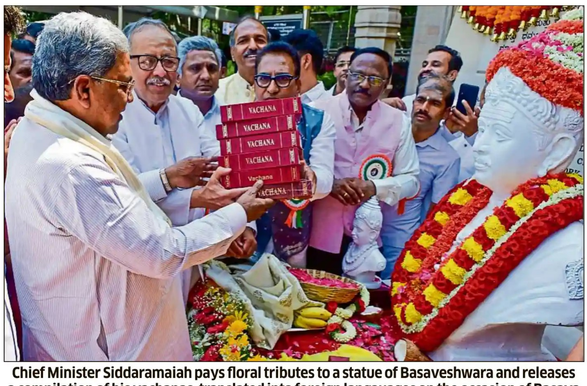
"These people contributed to division within the Muslim vote base, deliberately creating confusion and misleading Congress supporters, thereby helping smaller parties and independent candidates, and ultimately benefiting BJP in the election," the statement said.

The statement also expressed 'deep concern' over religious leaders getting involved.

Last week, Jamiat Ulama Karnataka president Mufti Iftikhar Ahmad Qasmi and other clerics decried disciplinary action against MLCs Abdul Jabbar and Naseer Ahmed.

"Clerics were misled with incorrect information," Sayeed Ahmed said.

REVERING THE REFORMER



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah pays floral tributes to a statue of Basaveshwara and releases a compilation of his vachanas, translated into foreign langauages on the occasion of Basava Jayanti in Bengaluru on Monday. DH PHOTO/PRASHANTH H G

Will challenge attempt to reinstate Jabbar in Cong, says D'gere leader

DAVANGERE, DHNS: Amid the uproar over the ouster of prominent leaders of the minority community from the Congress party over accusations of sabotage in the byelection to the Davangere South Assembly constituency, block Congress president of Davangere South Ayub Pailwan on Monday said he would challenge any attempts made to reinstate expelled MLC K Abdul Jabbar.

Addressing a press conference in Davangere, Pailwan said, "Jabbar was thrice appointed president of the Davangere district Congress, and was elected as an MLC three times because of the late Shamanur Shivashankarappa. Disciplinary action should have been taken against him for anti-party activities during the byelection. It would be better for him to retire from politics rather than try and return to the party."

Pailwan said Jabbar had raised the issue of the ticket for the Davangere South bypoll at a meeting convened by the party to discuss the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. "Local leaders then suggested that it would be better to discuss the issue with Davangere district incharge Minister S S Mallikarjun. Jabbar has since been involved in anti-party activities," said Pailwan.

Jabbar refused to meet Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, KPCC president D K Shivakumar and AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, all of whom descended on Davangere South to ensure the party's victory, said Pailwan. "As an MLC, be is duty-bound to work for victory of the party's candidate. It's ridiculous for him to say he was not invited to campaign," he said.

Convicted MLAs bank on appellate relief to escape disqualification

Vinay Kulkarni's sentence exceeds 2 yrs, attracts immediate action

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The ruling Congress has been reduced to 133 seats in the 224-member Assembly following the conviction of Dharwad Rural MLA Vinay Kulkarni, triggering his disqualification under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

A special court in Bengaluru, on April 17, 2026, sentenced Kulkarni to life imprisonment for the murder of BJP leader Yogeshgouda Goudar, holding that the killing was premeditated.

As the sentence exceeds two years, it attracts immediate disqualification (additional six years after completion of sentence) under Section 8(3) of the RP Act.

The earlier protection for legislators under Section 8(4) is no longer valid after the Supreme Court's ruling in Lily Thomas vs Union of India, which made disqualification automatic upon conviction, unless the conviction itself is stayed.

Kulkarni, arrested by CBI on November 5, 2020, was on bail when the trial concluded.

The Assembly Speaker needs to notify the vacancy once the certified copy of the court order is received, said an official.

Kulkarni could escape disqualification if conviction is suspended by higher court. The development has drawn attention to how appellate relief can alter consequences of conviction.

In October 2024, Karwar MLA Satish Sail was convicted in six cases related to the 2010 Belekeri port iron ore scam and given a seven-year sentence, leading to his disqualification.

However, the High Court of Karnataka suspended his conviction as an interim measure to "protect" his legislative status, while restricting his participation in Assembly proceedings, voting or drawing MLA's perks.

Gali Janardhan Reddy, arrested by the CBI in September 2011 in the OMC illegal mining case, spent 1,233 days in jail before securing bail.

On May 6, 2025, the CBI special court convicted Reddy and sentenced him to seven-year rigorous imprisonment, leading to his disqualification as MLA. However, the Telangana High Court suspended his conviction and sentence, citing he had already served 50% of the sentence and granted him bail. His disqualification was revoked.

Shobha seeks Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunal in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Union Minister of State for Labour Shobha Karandlaje has urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to set up the Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT) in Bengaluru.

In a letter to the finance minister, Karandlaje said at present, litigants aggrieved by orders of Debts Recovery Tribunal (DRT), Bengaluru, are required to approach DRAT in Chennai.

This imposes hardships on stakeholders, including banks, financial institutions, borrowers and legal practitioners in Karnataka.

The increasing pendency of matters has led to delays in adjudication and enforcement of financial claims, she said.

Establishing a DRAT in Bengaluru would reduce burden on the Chennai DRAT while ensuring timely disposal of appeals, the letter said.

PM, Shah pushed for quota bill hoping to 'arm twist' Oppn: Margaret Alva

'Itwas linked to census, delimitation to delay implementation'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Senior Congress leader Margaret Alva on Monday alleged that the Modi government had pushed for a Constitutional amendment bill for women's reservation and delimitation of Lok Sabha seats, despite knowing it had no majority.

She accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of attempting to "arm-twist and intimidate" the Opposition.

Addressing a press meet in Bengaluru, Alva termed the defeat of the bill "a shame" on the Modi government, and dubbed it as the "first legislative setback" of the BJP.

"In 2023, Modi brought the women's reservation bill with much fanfare in the new Parliament building. It was passed unanimously in both Houses. But now, the women's reservation was stalled at the same place due to BJP's conspiracy," said Alva, alleging that the Centre deliberately linked women's reservation with exercises like census and delimitation to delay its implementation.

Questioning the timing of the special session, Alva said, "It is a political gimmick during elections and women voters can see through the strategy," Alva said.

"Who gave Modi the 50% formula to enhance the Lok Sabha seats without due consultation with states? Did RSS give it or he dreamt it? The delimitation disproportionately favours the "BIMARU" - Hindi-speaking states," Alva said, adding that the move exposed BJP's "anti-women mindset".

Recounting the history of women's political reservation, Alva recalled a 14-member committee formed during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure had mooted women's political representation in its national perspective plan.

"The P V Narasimha Rao government ensured 33% reservation in local bodies and some states have increased it to 50%. Congress brought women's reservation, not Modi or his predecessors," she charged.

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

Judge in Rahul citizenship case recuses himself

Cites smear campaign on social media by complainant

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Business

India, South Korea to double trade to $50 bn by 2030 P.14

Business

Fertilisers, crude, coal drag core sector performance P.14

World

US to start refunding $166 bn in tariffs P.14

Nation

SC rejects review plea by Umar Khalid P.8

Quickly

Raj refinery launch deferred after fire

The Central government on Monday postponed the scheduled inauguration of HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Limited (HRRL), billed as the country's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical project. "Due to an unfortunate fire incident in the vicinity of the Crude Distillation Unit at the refinery, the scheduled dedication of the refinery by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 21.04.2026 has been postponed," the government said.

B'luru boy is state topper in JEE Phase-2

The National Testing Agency (NTA) announced the JEE Mains-2 results on Monday. Vishnu Sai Theja who topped the state in Phase-1 retained his position as the topper. Though Vishnu wrote the Phase-2 exams to improve his score, he retained the same score of 99.99%. He secured the 28th rank nationally. Vishnu is a student of the Narayana Co College in Bengaluru.
Details on Page 4

Judge rejects Kejriwal's recusal plea

Delhi High Court judge Swarana Kanta Sharma refused to recuse herself from hearing the liquor-policy case as she rejected the pleas of Arvind Kejriwal and others for her withdrawal. Justice Sharma said a litigant cannot be allowed to judge a judge without any material and judges cannot recuse themselves to satisfy a litigant's unfounded apprehension of bias.
Details on Page 10

Tehran says no decision on talks as US seizes Iran's ship

Trump says won't lift Hormuz blockade till Iran agrees to deal

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD/ LONDON, AGENCIES

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Trump says Israel "never" talked him into the war with Iran

- Israeli army saying it is investigating the incident of one of its soldiers in south Lebanon hitting a statue of Jesus Christ
- Oil prices surge on a re-escalation of hostilities in the West Asia war
- Iran FM says 'continued violations of ceasefire' by US an obstacle to diplomatic process
- UAE authorities arrest members of a unit with alleged ties to Iran
- Trump says new nuclear deal US currently negotiating with Iran will be better than 2015's

Iranian-flagged cargo ship M/V Touska that was seized by US forces in the Gulf of Oman. REUTERS

The US Navy's forcible seizure of an Iranian-flagged cargo ship has thrown doubt on President Donald Trump's announcement that US negotiators would travel to Pakistan on Monday for another round of talks with Iran.

Trump's announcement Sunday had raised hopes of extending a fragile ceasefire set to expire by Wednesday, but then US Marines boarded the cargo ship that tried to circumvent a naval blockade near the Strait of Hormuz.

The container ship Touska is part of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) group that has been hit with US sanctions.

The US Central Command said Touska's crew failed to comply with repeated warnings over a six-hour period, and that the vessel was in violation of a US blockade.

Security sources, who declined to be identified, said their initial assessments were the vessel was likely to be carrying dual-use items after a voyage from Asia.

Iran's joint military command said Tehran would respond soon to what it called an act of piracy.

Iranian foreign ministry said in a statement on Monday that Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told his Pakistani counterpart, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, that continued ceasefire violations by the US are a major obstacle on continuation of diplomatic process.

Trump on Monday said the US would not lift its blockade of Iranian ports until Tehran had agreed a peace deal to end the war. "THE BLOCKADE, which we will not take off until there is a 'DEAL,' is absolutely destroying Iran," Trump said on social media.

Earlier in the day, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said Tehran did not have plans yet to attend any talks with the US.

"We have no plans for the next round of negotiations and no decision has been made in this regard," he told reporters in Tehran.

▸ Iran, Page 4

21 killed as bus rolls down hill in J&K

SRINAGAR, DHNS: At least 21 people were killed and 61 others injured when a bus rolled down a hill in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Monday, officials said.

The bus, travelling from Ramnagar to Udhampur, met with the accident near Kanote/Jalo village when the driver lost control while negotiating a dangerous bend on a narrow hill road, said the officials.

Local residents were the first to arrive on the accident scene and began rescue efforts before police and disaster response teams took over.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced Rs 2 lakh for families of the deceased, Rs 1 lakh for the seriously injured and Rs 25,000 for those with minor injuries.

SC to seek HC report on Bengal SIR tribunals' working

Counsel claims appellate tribunals not 'functioning'

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

People wait to file petitions before a tribunal after their names were deleted from the voter list, in Nadia district. PTI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it would seek a report from the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court as a counsel claimed that the appellate tribunals hearing the SIR-related petitions in West Bengal were not functioning as per the top court's order.

The appellate tribunals were constituted to hear appeals against exclusions/ inclusions in the voters' list of the poll-bound state after the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls carried out by the Election Commission.

Senior advocate Devadatt Kamat mentioned the matter before a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, insisting that the appellate tribunals were not allowing lawyers to represent parties and were not accepting physical applications.

▸ SIR, Page 4

'Can't have fishing inquiry'

The SC declined a "fishing inquiry" into the alleged addition of 5-7 lakh voters in Bengal rolls, saying this could be examined only upon the filing of a proper petition. "We can't have a fishing inquiry," the court said as senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy mentioned the matter.
Details on Page 8

DH Political Theatre

» In Malda, Congress leans on legacy

» Parched and poverty-stricken Purulia cries for water and industry

P9

After migrant chaos, BJP 'voter' train from Surat heads to Bengal

AHMEDABAD, DHNS: While chaos reigned at Udhna railway station in Surat on Sunday, where thousands of migrant workers from Bihar and Odisha rushed to board trains home, there was complete normalcy hours later as some 1,300 passengers departed for West Bengal by a special train. These passengers, from various parts of West Bengal, work in Surat and are said to be BJP supporters. They are part of BJP's plan to send 5,000 migrants to vote for "change".
Details on Page 8

TOXIC FLOW

Temple tourism turns river into sewer, Mookambika wildlife hit

DH SPECIAL

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Sewage from commercial activities related to religious tourism in Kollur has emerged as a threat to the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary in Udupi district, with the depleted Souparnika river carrying sewage and sludge to the core area in summer.

Notified in 1978, the 247 sq km sanctuary has historically recorded the Malabar civet, lion-tailed macaque, tiger, leopard, wild dog, king cobra, sloth bear and giant squirrel among other animals.

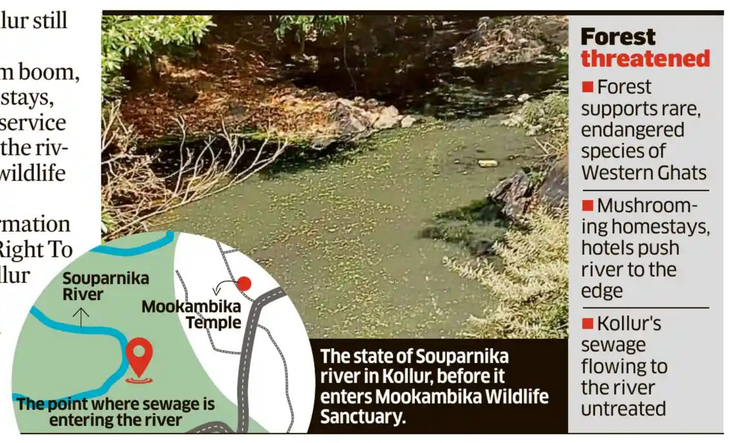
It is part of the troika of Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary-Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary and Kudremukh National Park which support rare and endangered species of the Western Ghats.

The Forest Department recognised the sewage from the temple town of Kollur as a "small but not an insignificant problem" back in 2005 while preparing the management plan, when Kollur still resembled a village.

Today, post tourism boom, mushrooming homestays, hotels and the allied service industry has pushed the river, the lifeline of the wildlife habitat, to the edge.

According to information obtained under the Right To Information Act, Kollur gram panchayat has provided permission for 50 commercial establishments.

▸ Mookambika, Page 4



The state of Souparnika river in Kollur, before it enters Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary.

Forest threatened

- Forest supports rare, endangered species of Western Ghats
- Mushrooming homestays, hotels push river to the edge
- Kollur's sewage flowing to the river untreated

Lease breach costs Bodhi Society prime plot in Jayanagar

DH SPECIAL

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bengaluru Central City Corporation has cancelled a decades-long lease of land to the Maha Bodhi Society, a Buddhist charitable organisation, on the charge of sub-letting the property, located in Jayanagar, to third parties.

The civic body has also directed the society to vacate the 44,545-square-foot plot within 15 days. The order, issued by the joint commissioner on March 13, pertains to a corporation property situated on T Mariyappa Road, Jayanagar 1st Block.

The land came to the custody of the society through two lease deeds with the then Bengaluru city corporation, signed in 1971 and 1974, for a period of 99 years.

According to the order to vacate the land, the civic authority flagged "gross violations" of lease conditions.

The society allegedly subleased portions of the property without authorisation.

The alleged violations include sub-leasing of around 4,900 sq ft to private individuals for Rs 50,000 per month and renting out premises of the hospital it runs to a private entity, Brains Medical Services, for up to Rs 25 lakh per month, along with a security deposit of Rs 1.75 crore.

Civic officials said these transactions were carried out through unregistered agreements and in stark contrast to the nominal rent of Rs 125 per year charged by the corporation under the original lease.

Office-bearers of the society, however, said there was no wrong-doing on their part and that they would approach the high court.

▸ Bodhi Society, Page 4

Traffic police bring back towing drive after four-year pause

Focus on abandoned vehicles, illegal parking in CBD & outer zones

BENGALURU, DHNS

After a four-year gap, the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have resumed vehicle-towing operations across the city, from April 6, to clear congestion caused by illegal parking.

The enforcement drive, launched in coordination with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), is active across six police stations.

Operations are focused on the Central Business District (CBD), including Ashoknagar and Wilson Garden, along with Kengeri and Jnanabharathi in the West, and Yelahanka and Sanjayanagar in the North.

The current phase focuses on removing abandoned vehicles that have remained on city roads for months.

The enforcement drive, launched in coordination with the Greater Bengaluru Authority, is active across six police stations. This image is from Residency Road. DH PHOTO

"We are prioritising clearing out long abandoned vehicles first," said a senior traffic police officer from the Sanjaynagar division.

"So far, we have towed 15 vehicles in our jurisdiction and another 10 from Hebbal," the officer said.

The BTP said the drive will expand in phases.

Motorists have been urged to follow designated parking zones to avoid inconvenience and costs linked to impounded vehicles.

BTP introduces safeguards

Following the 2022 suspension of towing due to public outcry over harassment and misconduct by towing staff, the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have introduced safeguards.

The system mandates geo-tagged-towing records and itemised receipts that distinguish between the penalty amount retained by the BTP and the towing fee allocated to the civic body.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Partly cloudy sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	36.0°C
Minimum	24.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	NIL
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	34%
Sunset (Apr 21)	6:33 pm
Sunrise (Apr 22)	6:05 am
Moonrise	8:16 am
Moonset	9:43 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Invites to be published should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

Free tailoring training

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Educational Trust, in collaboration with Canara Bank, is inviting applications from rural unemployed women for a 31-day free tailoring (fashion designing) training programme. The course will commence on May 11 and will be conducted through the RUDSET Institute.

Interested candidates may contact 9380162042, 9481506564, or 9740982585.

New 'Alcohol-in-Beverage' tax model triggers price concerns

Sparks market uncertainty, reshapes pricing slabs

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government's move to overhaul its liquor excise policy has triggered uncertainty across the city's spirits market.

Under the draft rules, taxation will be directly linked to alcohol content per litre. For distributors, the rate is fixed at Rs 1,000 per litre of pure alcohol. "The shift to taxing pure alcohol per litre is a major reform," said a representative of the Federation of Wine Merchants' Association. "Our concern is the compression of pricing slabs. Mid-range brands could be pushed into higher premium categories due to the recalibration of tax incidence."

"The big winners appear to be premium players such as Diageo and United Breweries, as deregulation allows them to price their labels more competitively without seeking state approvals," he added.

For instance, brands previously in Slab 5 (Rs 651–750) are now being merged into broader categories, where the Additional Excise Duty (AED) per litre of pure alcohol increases sharply as prices rise.

For beer, the draft proposes a tax of Rs 12 per bulk litre for products with up to 5% alcohol, and Rs 20 for those up to 8%.

"We expected a 10–15% drop in beer prices," said a customer at an MRP outlet. "But breweries are using price deregulation to offset rising logistics costs. The tax is lower, but the MRP remains unchanged."

However, local microbreweries and small-scale wineries say they have been overlooked. The association also warned that the pure alcohol–based taxation model could hurt the low-cost liquor segment prevalent in rural areas.

The government is targeting Rs 45,000 crore in revenue for FY 2026–27. The Finance Department has given stakeholders seven days to submit objections before finalising the rules.

Key impact of liquor policy overhaul

- Excise duty will now be linked directly to pure alcohol per litre (**Rs 1,000 per litre** of pure alcohol for distributors).
- Existing pricing slabs are being compressed, potentially pushing mid-range brands into premium tax brackets.

- Large players like **Diageo** and **United Breweries** may gain flexibility in pricing due to reduced regulatory constraints.
- Despite expected tax relief, retail prices may not fall as breweries offset costs like logistics.
- **Microbreweries** and small wineries fear being sidelined under the new pure-alcohol-based model.
- Low-cost liquor segments, especially in rural markets, may face adverse effects.
- Stakeholders have **7 days** to submit objections before final rules are finalised.
- State aims to collect **Rs 45,000 crore** in FY 2026–27.

RERA orders developer to hand over villa, pay compensation

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority (K-RERA) has pulled up Total Environment Building Systems Ltd, a Bengaluru-based developer, for failing to hand over a villa to Byatarayanapura residents within the promised timeline.

In an order dated March 11, K-RERA partly allowed the plea of homebuyers in the "After the Rain–Phase 1" project, observing that the developer had failed to meet the agreed possession deadline of May 31, 2023.

The Authority directed the developer to execute the sale deed and also ordered the firm to pay nearly Rs 70 lakh in interest for a delay of about two years in handing over possession.

The case pertains to a villa project in North Bengaluru.

The original owner purchased the villa for Rs 3.21 crore in July 2014. Eight years later, he sold it to the present complainants for Rs 4.77 crore. However, even after more than a decade since the original purchase and multiple deadline extensions, the project remained incomplete, prompting the complainants to approach K-RERA last year seeking relief.

The developer argued that the delay was due to the assignment process (transfer of ownership from the original buyer to another purchaser) and non-payment of the final installment.

It also stated that the completion timeline was extended due to customisation work requested by the buyers and claimed that the project was substantially complete, with only "minor works" pending.

However, the Authority ruled that the responsibility to complete the project within the stipulated timeline rests with the promoter. It also rejected the developer's contention that obtaining an Occupancy Certificate (OC) absolved it of liability, noting that possession is considered complete only when the unit is ready for habitation and actually handed over to the buyer.

Accordingly, K-RERA directed the developer to hand over physical possession of the villa upon receipt of the remaining sale consideration of about Rs 12.51 lakh and to execute the sale deed in favour of the complainants.

It further ordered the payment of delay interest from June 1, 2023, until the actual offer of possession in July 2025, calculated on the total consideration of Rs 3.31 crore.

North Bengaluru villa project dispute

- **July 2014:** Original owner purchased the villa for Rs 3.21 crore.
- **2022 (approx 8 years later):** Sold to present complainants for Rs 4.77 crore
- Despite more than 10 years since the original purchase and multiple deadline extensions, the villa project remains incomplete.
- **Current status:** The complainants approached K-RERA last year, seeking relief due to the prolonged delay and non-completion of the project.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Shankara Jayanti: Japanandji Maharaj, Pavagad Prakasrao, Shatavadhani R Ganesh, Tejasvi Surya, Ravi Subrahmanya, Uday B Garudachar, Dr CN Ashwath Narayan; Shankara Jayanti Seva Samiti; Sringeri Shankara Math, Chamarajpet; from 9.30 am.

B Basavalingappa's Birth Centenary Ceremony: Mallikarjun Kharge, Siddaramaiah, Basavaraj Horatti, UT Khader, HK Patil; B Basavalingappa Birth Centenary Celebration Committee; Banquet Hall, Vidhana Soudha; 11 am.

Water Festival: Sarathi; Suchitra Film Society, Banashankari Stage II; 11 am.

Discussion on M S Murthy's book 'Bowl': Sumitrabai, N Vidyashankar, MK Shankar; Bhoomi; The Indian Institute of World Culture, BP Wadia Road, Basavanagudi; 4.30 pm.

Acharya Shankar Jayanti 'Philosophers' Day Celebration: 'Shankar Seva for Senior Scholars' Award Presentation; Sreeshananda, K Gopalaiah; Mahalaxmipur Brahmin Sabha; Sriprasanna Veeranjaneyaswamy Temple, Mahalaxmipur; 5 pm.

Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti: Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar, Shivaraj S Tangadgi, Dinesh Gundu Rao, Uday B Garudachar; Lecture: Pavagada Prakasha Rao; Department of Kannada and Culture; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 5 pm.

'Srinivasa Kalyana' Discourse: Ashokacharya V Joshi; Srimaruti Mahaganapati Seva Sangha; Punyadhama, First Block, Rajajinagar; 6.45 pm.

CULTURAL

88th Sri Ramanavami Music Festival: Sri Ramaseva Ramanavami Celebration Trust; Kote High School Campus, Chamarajpet; 5 pm onwards.

State-level Kannada Ranga Competition-2026: 'Shmashana Kurukshetram' Drama Performance; Kalaradhya; Rangasthe; Yuvapath, Jayanagar 4th Phase; 7 pm.

'GK Mastarara Pranaya Prasang' Drama Performance: Chandrashekar Kambara; Directed by Bhaskar Ninasam; Organised by Vishwapath Kala Sangama; Rangashankara, JP Nagar; 7.30 pm.

'Resist US push to import GM crops'

BENGALURU, DHNS: Activists have expressed serious concern over alleged pressure from the United States government on India to import genetically modified (GM) maize in the form of dried distillers' grain solids (DDGS) and GM soybean oil.

In a letter to seven Union ministers on Monday, the Coalition for GM-Free India urged the Centre to resist attempts by the United States to push GM products into the Indian market.

"It is wrongly portrayed that American soybean oil and DDGS derived from GM maize do not contain GM material," said Sridhar Radhakrishnan of the coalition, citing tests that indicate the presence of GM content in soybean oil and highly processed maize products.

'Retain tariffs'

"The Supreme Court of India's Technical Expert Committee has highlighted significant risks associated with GM cotton consumption in animals. Preventing GM imports is a legitimate and responsible scientific and policy stance to safeguard farmers and consumers," the letter stated.

Addressed to Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and others, it argued permitting such imports would amount to a "backdoor entry" of GM food into India.

DEMAND SPIKE

Despite price pinch, gold sales shine on Akshaya Tritiya

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

The city's gold shops continued to have a steady flow of customers this Akshaya Tritiya, despite a significant drop in the quantity of purchase.

C Krishniah Chetty Group, with its flagship store in Commercial Street, recorded a 20% increase in revenue per store this festive season. The group has four showrooms in various parts of the city.

The quantity of gold purchased, however, fell 12% compared to last year, said Managing Director C Vinod Hayagriv.

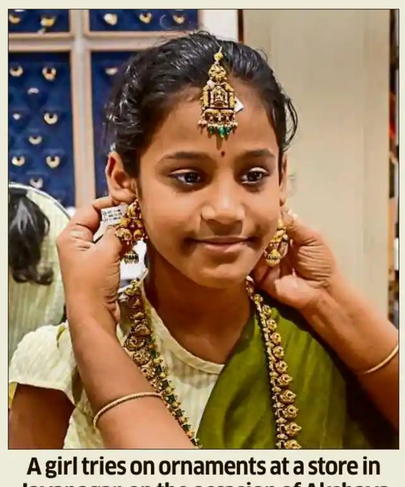
"More people appeared to be buying gold and natural diamonds. While there was only a marginal drop in diamond purchases, there was a surprisingly large drop in silver purchases," he added.

Businesses across the city noticed a similar pattern.

Goutham Badera, proprietor of Panchkesari Badera Jewellers, which has three stores in the city, noted a sharp fall in the quantity of gold purchased.

"We saw both regular customers as well as new customers, and the flow of customers more or less remained the same. But customers who could usually end up purchasing 100 grams of gold on the festive occasion, resorted to buying only 30 to 40 grams. Since it is an auspicious occasion, people did not want to miss out on tradition," he told *DH*.

Rather than intricate jewellery, most customers chose gold coins and bullion, well into Monday afternoon. During the festivities, a 0.5 gm gold coin was priced at Rs 8,200 on average.



A girl tries on ornaments at a store in Jayanagar, on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya. DH PHOTO/PRASHANTH HG

"While most customers dropped in on Sunday, many also came in on Monday. Most people only wanted gold coins," said the manager of a store in Malleswaram.

Wedding jewellery also remained in demand.

"A lot of people wait till Akshaya Tritiya to make purchases for big occasions, such as weddings. Not only is it auspicious, but they also get to make use of the festive offers. We have 30% off on making charges and offers running on diamond jewellery. We sold to multiple wedding parties, with bills going up to Rs 10 lakh and beyond," said a sales executive at the MG Road branch of a popular chain of gold stores.

Laabh Jewels in Wilson Garden saw a demand for gold coins and jewellery.

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CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Divisional Store Office Central Railway, Solapur for and on behalf of President of India invites online e-tenders on Railway's e-procurement website **www.ireps.gov.in** from the capable, reputed firms/Contractors for the following works. **Tender No.:** 96265011B, **Description:** Goods, Manufacture and Supply of Elastic Rail Clips MK-V confirming to RDSO Drg.no. T5919 Alt-2 (Latest alteration) and confirming to IRS Specification for ERC S. No. T-31-2021-Fifth Revision (with amendment-2 & latest alteration) **Quantity:** 120846 Nos., **Earnest Money (INR):** Rs. 2,41,470/-, **Date & Time of Closing of tender on www.ireps.gov.in:** 30.04.2026 after 11:30. The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: **www.ireps.gov.in.**

Sr. Divisional Materials Manager
DE/Sur-16 **Central Railway, Solapur**

TRAVEL SAFELY, AVOID FOOTBOARD TRAVELLING

PROVISION OF SECURED SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

E-Tender Notice No.: RN-ST-01-2026-27 Dated: 16-04-2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:- **Tender No. RN-ST-01-2026-27 Name of Work:** Provision of Secured Surveillance system with Networking for real time monitoring at all Special Class LC Gates of Rangiya Division of N.F. Railway. **Tender Value:** ₹1,18,64,547.40/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹2,37,300/-. **Date & time of closing of tender:** At **15.00** hrs. **& opening at 15.30** hrs. on **12-05-2026** at Sr. DSTE/Rangiya office. The complete information with tender documents of above e-Tender will be available in website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Note: For any changes of tender please check on Internet website/ news-paper/corrigendum in the original tender notice before dropping.

DRM (S&T), Rangiya
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:

E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/03 Dated: 15.04.2026

Sl.#	Item of work	Approx. Value
1	(i) Recoupment of ballast at TSS, SP/SSP and provision of Cable Trench covers, (ii) provision of earthing and bonds at SSP/SP, FOB and Platform shelters in Bengaluru (SBC) Division.	Rs. 76,89,998.26

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**

E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/02 Dated: 15.04.2026

2	(i) OHE Modifications in connection with construction of FOB at Sivadi (SZV) Station. (ii) OHE Modification in connection with construction of FOB at Toppur Station. (iii) OHE Modifications in connection with provision of additional loop line at Karuvalli (KVLR). (iv) Dharmapuri Jn. (DPJ) Road-4 full wiring.	Rs. 1,11,76,235.80

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**

E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/01 Dated: 15.04.2026

3	Dodballapur (DBU): OHE Modifications in connection with provision of Emergency Displatch cross over at Yelahanka (YNK) end for providing Universal R&D facility to all running lines and connectivity from Tower Car Shed to existing shunting neck including extension neck from 440 to 600m.	Rs. 80,58,459.00

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/ Traction Distribution/ Bengaluru

PUB/47/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2026-27

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Rail Wheel Plant/Bela
(Distt. - Saran), Bihar - 841221

E-Tender Notice No. 01/RWP/Engg/2026-27/WT(Open) Date 17.04.2026. The Dy. CE/RWP/Bela for and on behalf of the President of India, invites Online **"e-Open Tender"** through Indian Railways E- Procurement Portal (IREPS) **www.ireps.gov.in** for the following works as detailed:- **1. Name of the work and Location, Approximate cost, Earnest money and Completion period of the work: Tender No.:** 01_RWP_Engg_26_27_WT_Open. **Name of Work:-** Improvement of drainage system and other related ancillary works in connection with providing healthy environment in plant area, officers colony & staff colony at RWP/Bela. **Approximate cost:** Rs. 5,90,91,507/-. **Tender form Cost:** Nil. **Earnest money:** Rs. 11,81,800/-. **Completion period of the work:** 06 Months. **Tender No.:** 02_ RWP_Engg_26_27_WT_Open. **Name of Work:** Construction of godown for Engineering department in campus of engineering office at RWP/Bela. **Approximate cost:** Rs. 1,01,00,352/-. **Tender form Cost:** Nil. **Earnest money:** Rs. 2,02,000/-. **Completion period of the work:** 10 Months. **Tender No.: 03_RWP_Engg_26_27_WT_Open. Name of Work:** Painting of steel structure and Building of RWP/Bela for protection against erosion and weather and to comply against Factory Act-1948. **Approximate cost:** Rs. 7,01,80,287/-. **Tender form Cost:** Nil. **Earnest money:** Rs. 14,03,700/-. **Completion period of the work:** 06 Months. **2. Tender closing date and time:** 08.05.2026 upto 14:30 Hrs. **3. Website particulars and notice board location where complete details of tender can be obtained and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.:** The above tender can be submitted only by the date and time as mentioned in the notice. For full details and submission of bid kindly visit Portal (IREPS) **www.ireps.gov.in**. The prospective firms/bidders submitting bid are advised to remain in touch with IREPS Portal (**www.ireps.gov.in**) for updates including Addendum/Corrigendum/ Cancellation with respect to the above tender because no such any notice/ information concerned that shall be published in newspaper.

Dy. Chief Engineer/Rail Wheel Plant, Bela
For and on behalf of the President of India
RWP/CPRO/ADVT/2026-27/06

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

Tender Notice No. : e-Tender/2026/13, dated 17.04.2026. e-Tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), S.E.Railway, Kharagpur-721301 for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works **before 15.00 hrs.** on the date mentioned against items and will be **opened at 15.30 hrs. : Sl. No. & Tender No.; Description of work; Tender Value; Earnest Money : (1) E-KGP-South-13-2026;** Execution of the work of: (i) Cess repair & strengthening of bank under Sr. Section Engineer/P.Way/Hijli and construction of central drain in between Belda-Nekurseni under Sr. Section Engineer/ P.Way/Dantan, (ii) Augmentation facilities in RGM siding at Hijli & Dantan under Assistant Divisional Engineer (South)/ Kharagpur. (3rd Call); ₹ 2,94,81,164.17; ₹ 5,89,600/-. **(2) E-KGP-EAST-20-2026;** Construction of 2 Nos. Gates Goomty on Level Crossing no. HA-4, HA-7 in Howrah-Amta section and Construction of Santragachi Store building at Santragachi Coaching Depot under the jurisdiction of Sr. Divisional Engineer (East)/Kharagpur; ₹ 2,53,92,544.56; ₹ 5,07,900/-. **(3) E-KGP-HQ-11-2026;** Construction of Relay Hut for Gate signaling at 9 no. non-interlocked Level Crossing Gates having TVU above 10,000 under the jurisdiction of Divisional Engineer/HQ/Kharagpur; ₹ 1,83,54,100.47; ₹ 3,67,100/-. **(4) E-KGP-HQ-12-2026;** Improvement of old non functional Cossye Halt well by providing new DI 300mm dia pipe line with steel structure approach near Cossye Halt (West side) along with providing 200000 Gallon capacity ground reservoir & pump house under the jurisdiction of Assistant Engineer/ WW/Kharagpur; ₹ 3,72,25,166/-; ₹ 7,44,500/-. **(5) E-KGP-HQ-13-2026;** Renovation of bungalows in the section of Sr. Section Engineer(W)/ South-West/Kharagpur under the jurisdiction of Assistant Divisional Engineer/ Settlement/Kharagpur; ₹ 16,61,791.12; ₹ 33,200/-. **(6) E-KGP-EAST-21-2026;** Execution of work for, Improvement of defective layout for removal of PSR -110 KMPH, Improvement of Drainage system and Bad Bank in approach at Haur Station under Sr. Divisional Engineer/East/ Kharagpur; ₹ 8,00,30,716.47; ₹ 16,00,600/- **Tender Document Cost :** 0.00 for each. **Completion period of the work :** 12 Months for sl. no. 1 to 4 & 6 and 06 Months for sl. no. 5. **Date of opening :** 07.05.2026 for sl. no. 1, 11.05.2026 for sl. no. 2 to 5 and 14.05.2026 for sl. no. 6. **Bidding start Date:** From 23.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 07.05.2026 for sl. no. 1, From 27.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 11.05.2026 for sl. no. 2 to 5 and From 30.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 14.05.2026 for sl. no. 6. Interested Tenderers may visit website **www.ireps.gov.in** for full details/descriptions/specifications of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these works will be accepted. **N.B.** Prospective bidders may regularly visit **www.ireps.gov.in** to participate in all tenders. **(PR-59)**

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: ECN-01-2026-RT1

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Arranging additional High Tension Power supply to an extent dedicated feeder for 1150 KVA (Existing 350 KVA) totaling to 1500 KVA from Pottery Road to Bangalore Cantonment Railway station.	Rs. 1,12,52,164.02/-

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/ Traction Distribution-II/Construction/ Bengaluru Cantonment

PUB/44/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2026-27

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कार्यालयः– जिला अभियंता, लातेहार।

पुर्न अल्पकालीन ई–निविदा आंमत्रण सूचना

ई0–संख्या– ZP/LATEHAR- 35/2025-26 (2nd call)

कार्य का नामः–

क्र	योजना का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि	अग्रधन की राशि	परिमाण विपत्र की राशि	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	अभ्युक्ति
1	लातेहार जिला परिषद कार्यालय भवन का निर्माण।	8,08,12,524	16,16,300	10,000	11 माह	द्वितीय सूचना

1. वेबसाईट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथिः– 20.04.2026
2. ई–निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समयः–27.04.2026, 5.00 बजे अपराहन् तक।
3. निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समयः–29.04.2026 अपराहन 11:00 बजे।
4. परिमाण विपत्र की राशि घट–बढ़ सकती है तदनुसार परिमाण विपत्र का 02 प्रतिशत राशि अग्रधन की राशि के रूप में जमा करना होगा।
5. निविदा शुल्क की राशि केवल Online Mode द्वारा स्वीकार किया जाएगा।
6. अग्रधन की राशि का ई–भुगतान जिस खाता से किया जाएगा उसी खाते में अग्रधन की राशि वापस होगी।
7. निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले पदाधिकारी का नाम एवं पताः– जिला अभियंता, लातेहार।
8. ई–निविदा प्रकोश्ठ का दूरभाश संख्या– 93347–02381
9. प्राक्कलित राशि बढ़ या घट सकती है।
10. उक्त निविदा में जिला परिशद, लातेहार में निबंधित समुचित श्रेणी के संवेदक निविदा में भाग ले सकते है।
11. विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाईट www.jharkhandtendres.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

जिला अभियंता, लातेहार।

PR 377881 Rural Development(26-27)D

Bannerghatta Road re-laying begins after months of complaints

BENGALURU, DHNS: With complaints mounting on social media about its poor condition for several months, the South City Corporation has finally began asphalting a 1.5-km stretch of Bannerghatta Road.

The move has raised questions about delayed action despite fund allocation.

In a press note, Corporation Commissioner KN Ramesh said the road had deteriorated due to drainage pipeline installation work taken up by the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

He said the entire stretch would be repaired immediately. "A one-km stretch of road from Kalyani Choultry on Bannerghatta Main Road to the IIMB metro station has been asphalted," he said.

'Over by tomorrow'

"The work on the remaining section of the road will be completed by tomorrow night and the road will be opened for traffic."

DH had reported on the poor condition of this stretch.

South Corporation engineers had earlier distanced themselves from maintaining the road, stating that it falls under the purview of Namma Metro, which has taken up work along the stretch.

SUMMER FAVOURITE

People purchase mangoes from vendors along Jayamahal Main Road in Bengaluru on Monday as the seasonal fruit hits peak availability. DH PHOTO/BK JANARDHAN

DCRE inspector alleges caste harassment, threatens suicide

Claims forced bias in cases; threatens extreme step in video

BENGALURU, DHNS

Accusing senior officers of caste-based harassment, a police inspector attached to the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE) has threatened to kill himself if the alleged persecution continues.

Srinivas TR, posted in DCRE West Division, has called out two officials at the department headquarters of targeting him since he is a Dalit.

In a representation submitted to DCRE Director General Umesh Kumar, Srinivas alleged that he was pressured to favour upper caste accused in cases registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. He has also recorded a video narrating the alleged harassment.

The inspector alleged that false petitions were instigated against him by complainants at the behest of senior officers, and that he was subjected to harassment under the guise of an inquiry.

He claimed that despite obtaining a stay order from the Karnataka Administrative Tribunal (KAT) against his transfer to Udupi, he was relieved from duty through "fabricated documents" as part of a conspiracy.

"If such harassment continues and discrimination by senior officers does not stop, I may take an extreme step and the officials would be responsible for it," Srinivas said in the video, which he shared with senior officers, and which later went viral on social media.

SP seeks 30 mins with HM to expose 'IPS misconduct'

BENGALURU/MANGALURU, DHNS: SS Kashi, Superintendent of Police, attached to the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE), Bengaluru Division, has written to the Director General and Inspector General of Police (DG&IGP), seeking 30 minutes to present what he described as serious allegations against a few IPS officers.

Sudheer Kumar Reddy

The letter has triggered discussions within the police department.

In his letter, Kashi alleged that some IPS officers from other states were harassing and ill-treating Kannada-speaking lower-rank personnel.

He has requested an opportunity to present his case in the presence of the Chief Minister, Home Minister and Home Secretary. Kashi has also made direct allegations against Mangaluru City Police Commissioner Sudheer Kumar Reddy CH.

Stating that he would expose the alleged "misconduct" of certain IPS officers, Kashi urged authorities to grant him time between April 18 and 29, ahead of his retirement later this month.

Mangaluru police chief rejects allegations

Mangaluru Police Commissioner Sudheer Kumar Reddy CH has dismissed allegations of nepotism and harassment of subordinate staff by non-Kannadiga IPS officers, including himself, terming them baseless. The claims were made in a letter by DCRE Bengaluru Division Superintendent of Police SS Kashi to the DGP&IGP. "Based on my report, a departmental enquiry was initiated against him (Kashi). My actions were also upheld by the Karnataka Appellate Tribunal (KAT). Having exhausted all legal options, he has now resorted to this," Reddy told *DH*.

IT employee sends obscene images after Rs 27-L fraud

Claims pressure from threats by unknown persons in China and Pakistan

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

An employee of a reputed IT firm has been booked for allegedly sending obscene emails to senior management after misusing a corporate credit card to the tune of Rs 27 lakh.

The FIR stated that Soumya Ranjan Panda worked as a systems administrator at an IT company on Sarjapur Road from April 2022. He had been issued a corporate credit card with a limit of Rs 2 lakh for official expenses.

A senior police officer said that after the credit limit was enhanced, Panda allegedly misused the card between October 2023 and January 2024, spending Rs 27,01,139 on unauthorised transactions.

When the company questioned him on January 12, he reportedly claimed he acted under pressure due to threats and blackmail by unknown persons based in China and Pakistan. Despite assuring the company that he would repay Rs 10 lakh in three instalments by mid-February, he failed to do so.

The complainant alleged that on February 9, Panda sent emails containing obscene images to senior management, attempting to justify his actions. He also reportedly threatened to end his life.

The company accused him of cheating by misrepresenting facts to enhance the credit limit and misusing company funds.

Based on a complaint, Varthur police have registered a case.

The accused is absconding and efforts are on to trace him, a senior police officer said.

Marriage proposal fallout triggers online abuse, threats

BENGALURU, DHNS: A fallout over a failed marriage proposal between two families escalated into alleged online abuse and criminal intimidation, prompting police to register an FIR against two men.

A senior police officer said a 45-year-old woman, a resident of Indiranagar 2nd Stage, approached the local police, alleging that two of her male relatives posted abusive and derogatory messages against her on a WhatsApp group named 'D K Boss', reportedly created by members of both families. The messages allegedly contained insults and were intended to defame her.

Police found that both families knew each other and had created WhatsApp groups to stay connected. Tensions escalated after a marriage proposal between the two sides did not materialise, following which members from both sides allegedly exchanged abusive messages in the group.

LUXURY CAR, LOCAL CHAOS

From supercar to street repair, bizman's Porsche stunt goes viral

BENGALURU, DHNS

A Bengaluru businessman poured cement on the bonnet of his Porsche, mixed it with a spade, and used the slurry to fill a city pothole, in a stunt that has gone viral.

Akhil Hemadri, owner of a car detailing business, shared the video on Instagram.

It shows him pouring cement and water directly on to the bonnet of his high-end sports car, mixing the slurry with a spade, and filling a crater on a city road.

The act looked like a protest against the city's crumbling road infrastructure.

Entrepreneur Akhil Hemadri turns his Porsche bonnet into a cement mixer to fix a pothole. SCREEN GRAB

Hemadri clarified in his Instagram post, however, that the primary purpose was to demonstrate the Paint Protection Film (PPF) applied to his vehicle. By mixing abrasive cement on the car, he aimed to prove the protective layer could prevent damage to the paintwork.

The video drew mixed reactions.

Some praised the stunt as a creative way of drawing attention to the city's pothole crisis. Others dismissed it as a publicity exercise designed to promote his business.

Hemadri maintained that while the video served as brand promotion, it also carried a message — citizens should take proactive steps to care for their surroundings rather than rely solely on the government.

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GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
NOTICE FOR ROLLING ADVERTISEMENT FOR TEACHING FACULTY POSTS
AT TURA MEDICAL COLLEGE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27
No. Health.145/2026/2 Dated: Shillong, 20th April 2026
The **Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya**, invites applications from eligible personnel for the posts of **14 Professor, 20 Associate Professor and 25 Assistant Professors on a contract basis** in these various disciplines for the **proposed Tura Medical College targeted to be operational during 2026 - 27 Academic Year.**
For detailed advertisement, including eligibility criteria, application form and other instructions, please visit the official website of the Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya: **https://meghealth.gov.in**
Sd/-
MIPR No.: 0165
Dated: 20-04-2026
Joint Secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya,
Health & Family Welfare Department.

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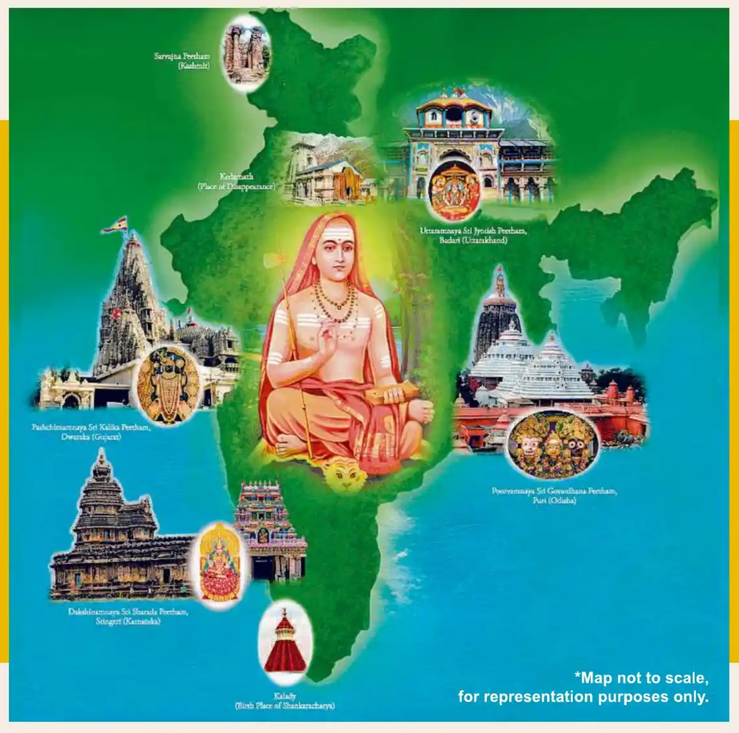
JAGADGURU SRI ADI SHANKARACHARYA

VAISHAKHA SHUKLA PANCHAMI
APRIL 21, 2026


Sarvajna Peetham (Kashmir)
Kedarnath (Place of Disappearance)
Uttaramnaya Sri Jyotish Peetham, Badari (Uttarakhand)
Paschimnaayaya Sri Kalika Peetham, Dwaraka (Gujarat)
Poorvamnaya Sri Govardhana Peetham, Puri (Odisha)
Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri (Karnataka)
Kalady (Birth Place of Shankaracharya)
*Map not to scale, for representation purposes only.

Today, Shankara Jayanti, marking the anniversary of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya's birth, is celebrated throughout the world by followers of Sanatana Dharma.

A Legacy Beyond Time

Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism as it is known today, is vibrant today largely due to the efforts of the Avatar of Bhagavan Parameshwara, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya the great philosopher saint, who lived over twelve centuries ago. Rarely in history has a single individual shaped the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical fabric of a civilisation so profoundly. Sri Adi Shankaracharya's influence continues to guide millions, inspiring seekers toward knowledge, harmony, and liberation.

KALADY — THE SACRED BIRTHPLACE OF THE JAGADGURU

A Sacred Landmark Rediscovered

Though the life and achievements of Sri Adi Shankaracharya remain eternal, his birthplace had faded from public memory for centuries. It was in the late 19th century that Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Mahaswamiji (33rd Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham) rediscovered Kalady and restored its rightful place in India's spiritual map.

Where History And Divinity Meet

This remarkable rediscovery was made possible through the spiritual insight of the Mahaswamiji, supported by the dedicated efforts of erstwhile rulers, scholars, administrators, historians, and devotees of the time.

The places associated with the early life of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya — from the time of his parents, Aryamba and Shivaguru, to the extraordinary events of his childhood — have been identified in and around Kalady. These findings are rooted in the authentic text Madhaviya Shankara Digvijaya, composed by Sri Vidyaranya Mahaswamiji (12th Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham).

Glimpses Of A Divine Childhood

In accordance with the Namboodiri tradition, his mother, Aryamba, who gave birth to Sri Adi Shankaracharya at Kalady, continued to reside there after the passing of Shivaguru. The young Shankara studied at a nearby Gurukula, where he composed the famed Kanakadhara Stotram, blessing a poor household with lasting prosperity — an episode that continues to inspire faith and devotion. The young prodigious Shankara served his elderly mother and turned away the wealth presented by the Kerala king. It was from his birthplace at Kalady in Kerala that the young Shankara, aged only 8, set out on his remarkable journey to study Vedanta under the eminent Guru, Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya.

Scan for further Information, participation in contests and to widen your Knowledge of Dharma and Sri Adi Shankaracharya

NATIONAL & DHARMIC INTEGRATION — SRI ADI SHANKARACHARYA's TIMELESS VISION

Reconnecting a Diverse Nation Through Spiritual Unity

India's rich spiritual heritage has long encouraged pilgrimage and devotion. Yet, it was the great philosopher-saint Sri Adi Shankaracharya who revitalised this tradition, traveling across the entire nation three times in his 32 year lifetime. His journeys were not merely spiritual — they were a powerful mission to unify the country. With great foresight, Sri Adi Shankaracharya established four Amnaya Peethams in the four directions of India.

Among these, the Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham established at Sringeri has been adorned by an unbroken succession of illustrious Acharyas right from Sri Adi Shankaracharya's direct disciple, Sri Sureshwaracharya. The lives of the Acharyas and their efforts to continue the mission of Sri Adi Shankaracharya are remarkable and unique. Following the guidelines outlined in the Mathamnaya Stotra for a head of the Amnaya Peetham, the Shankaracharyas of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham by their own conduct and by their discourses, teach dharmic tenets, impart Vedantic wisdom and also instill in us the need for paying gratitude to Sri Adi Shankaracharya.

Besides the four Amnaya Peethams, many smaller Shankarite institutions or Shakha Maths came to be established by the later Shankaracharyas starting from Sri Vidyaranya Mahaswamiji (the 12th Sringeri Shankaracharya, renowned for being instrumental in the founding of the Vijayanagar empire).

Reviving Sacred Traditions

During his travels, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya restored temple worship and reestablished sacred Murtis in key pilgrimage centres like Badrinath, Jagannath Puri etc. and Srichakra Yantras in Kollur, Kanchipuram etc. At Sringeri, He consecrated Sri Sharadamba, the divinity of Knowledge on a Srichakra and established the southern Amnaya Peetham. Sri Shankaracharya demonstrated the importance of women in our tradition, as evidenced by the appointment of Mandana Mishra's wife, Ubhaya Bharati to adjudicate in the famous debate.

Unity Beyond Regions

To strengthen national integration His actions bridged regional differences and fostered a shared spiritual identity. For instance, He appointed:

- Kerala Nambudiris to serve at Badrinath in the north
- Maharashtra priests, after receiving sacred Deeksha from the Sringeri Shankaracharya, to conduct worship at Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple in Rameswaram.
- Padmapadacharya from the south as the Peethadhipati of the Dwaraka Peetham in the west.
- Sureshwaracharya from the north as the Peethadhipati of the southern Peetham at Sringeri

The Universal Message

At a time when sectarian conflicts were prevalent, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya promoted harmony by reviving the Panchayatana Puja system and worship of six major paths or Shanmata.

The Jagadguru emphasised that true liberation comes from realising Brahman, the ultimate Reality. By transcending divisions and embracing unity, individuals can achieve lasting peace and freedom from suffering.

GRATITUDE TO THE UNIVERSAL PRECEPTOR

Honouring the Tradition that Preserves Timeless Wisdom

Offering gratitude to Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya was systematised by the remarkable contributions of the 33rd Shankaracharya of Sringeri, Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Mahaswamiji in the late 19th century. He directed that Shankara Jayanti be observed over five days across the world—by Hindus and all admirers of Sri Adi Shankaracharya, transcending boundaries of nationality and religion. Today these celebrations are held not only in Bharat, but also across continents including Europe, Australia, Africa and the Americas.

Under the Mahaswamiji's direction, the complete works of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya were first compiled and made accessible, ensuring that every sincere spiritual seeker can benefit from this timeless wisdom.

SRI SHANKARA JAYANTI 2026 — GRAND CELEBRATIONS

A Sacred Gathering of Devotion, Learning, and Tradition

Dakshinamnaya Sringeri Sharada Peethadheeshwara, Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji and Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati Mahaswamiji will celebrate the auspicious Sri Shankara Jayanti of the Paraabhava Samvatsara from April 18 to April 21, 2026 at Sringeri. Similarly Kalady, the birth place of Sri Adi Shankaracharya and hundreds of branches of Sringeri and other Amnaya Peethams, various Maths as well as the central and state governments, and various spiritual centres across the world celebrate this day. The celebrations will feature a rich blend of sacred rituals and spiritual discourses, Veda Parayana, Vakyartha Sabha, special Pujas at Sri Adi Shankaracharya temples, Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya Parayana, Poorna Arati at the river Poorna, Teppotsava, Rathotsava, grand procession etc.

Devotees, scholars, and spiritual seekers from across the country are invited to participate in this divine celebration — honouring the timeless teachings of Adi Shankaracharya and preserving India's rich spiritual heritage.

Join the celebration. Experience the tradition. Be part of a living legacy.

SRI SRI JAGADGURU SHANKARACHARYA MAHASAMSTHANAM
Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham,
Sringeri - 577 139.
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Tehran says no decision on talks as US seizes Iran's ship

Iran, From Page 1

"The US is carrying out behaviours that do not in any way indicate seriousness in pursuing a diplomatic process," he added, calling an ongoing US blockade of Iranian ports and its seizure of a ship "clear violations of the ceasefire".

Strait of Hormuz

Earlier, Reuters, citing security sources, reported that Trump told Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir that he would consider Munir's advice on the US blockade of Iran's ports being a hurdle to peace talks with Iran when the two spoke by phone.

Meanwhile, The New York Post quoted Trump in an interview claiming that Vice President JD Vance is headed to Pakistan for negotiations on the Iran War, along with special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who is Trump's son-in-law.

"They're heading over now," Trump said. "They'll be there tonight."

But it's not quite clear if Trump was speaking more broadly or if the claims about Vance are accurate.

Trump also said he believed a nuclear deal the US is currently negotiating with Iran will be better than a 2015 international agreement to curb Tehran's nuclear program. "The DEAL that we are making with Iran will be FAR BETTER than the JCPOA, commonly referred to as 'The Iran Nuclear Deal'," Trump wrote in a social media post after concerns expressed by Democrats and some nuclear experts that he is rushing negotiations on a highly complex topic.

With a two-week ceasefire set to expire in the coming days, prospects for a second round of talks between the US and Iran in Pakistan were not clear.

"I am under no pressure whatsoever, although, it will all happen, relatively quickly!" Trump added in a Truth Social post.

Land-owning Dalit women still depend on wage labour: Study

Income rose to Rs 10k-20k per month after land ownership

BHARATH JOSHI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Despite owning farmland under a government scheme, roughly six in 10 Dalit women still work as agricultural labourers on others' plots for income support, a new study has found.

The study, which evaluated the Bhoo Odetana scheme, concluded that land ownership has not fully eliminated dependence on wage labour for Scheduled Caste (SC) women.

Bihar-based TransRural Consulting studied the scheme implemented by the Karnataka Adijambava Development Corporation between 2020-21 and 2024-25. Its report has been published by the state-run Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA).

During the study period, there were 11,039 applications. Of this, only 2,270 women got land, highlighting "bottlenecks" in the scheme. The study covered 434 beneficiaries.

A majority of respondents belonged to low-income households earning less than Rs 5,000 a month. But after owning land, household income rose to Rs 10,000-20,000 per month.

Still, 58.76% of beneficiaries reported working as labourers elsewhere "indicating persistent livelihood insecurity".

"This suggests that while beneficiaries have gained land ownership through the scheme, their small landholdings and lower productivity still compel them to seek supplementary wage employment," the report said.

As much as 58.76% of beneficiaries reported working as labourers elsewhere, indicating persistent livelihood insecurity. DH FILE PHOTO

"This evidence reinforces the need for productivity-enhancing interventions (such as irrigation, soil fertility improvement and crop diversification) and convergence with allied livelihood schemes to reduce dependence on wage labour and ensure that land ownership translates into sustainable livelihood security," the report said.

Contrasting outcomes

The study also revealed contrasting outcomes on empowerment: While 93.8% of beneficiaries reported that land ownership improved their role in household financial decision-making, only 64.4% felt more financially independent.

"On one hand, land ownership has clearly given women greater voice and participation in decision-making processes within the household, signifying enhanced social recognition and bargaining power," the study said. "On the other hand, a smaller proportion feel truly financially independent, suggesting that control over resources and income flows remains limited in several cases."

In Raichur and Yadgir, poor bank cooperation slowed implementation of the scheme, with delays in account opening, loan disbursal and subsidy transfers even after approvals. In contrast, Haveri and Kolar saw smoother processes due to proactive district banking committees.

A key hurdle across regions is the low creditworthiness of landless SC women, many of whom are first-time borrowers without collateral, making banks hesitant despite government subsidies, the report said.

Land acquisition is another major challenge, the report found. In Chikkaballapur, Shivamogga and parts of Kolar, rising land prices, legal hurdles, and limited availability of cultivable land near habitations have made purchases difficult, especially in peri-urban areas where farmland is increasingly diverted for non-agricultural use.

What is Bhoo Odetana?

Under the Bhoo Odetana scheme, landless SC/ST agricultural labourers are given ownership of farmlands. The unit cost is Rs 25 lakh in Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru North, Bengaluru South and Chikkaballapur. In other districts, it is Rs 20 lakh. The government pays 50% of the cost and beneficiaries are given a term loan for the remaining amount.

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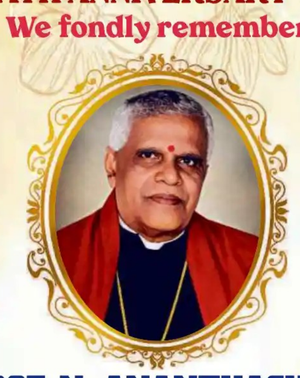

PROF. N. ANANTHACHAR
(05.09.1910 - 21.04.1976)
Founder Secretary, APS Institutions

On his 50th Death Anniversary, we pay our REVERENTIAL HOMAGE to a visionary educationist, compassionate leader, and the guiding force behind Acharya Patashala Institutions. His pioneering spirit, deep commitment to learning, and noble ideals continue to inspire generations of students, educators, and administrators.

On this special occasion a special Postal Cover and a Documentary on founder's life is being released by **Honorable Shri Tejasvi Surya,** Member of Parliament, Bengaluru South.

His legacy lives on - eternally etched in the heart of APS Family.

CA Dr. Vishnu Bharath Alampalli, Hon. President
Prof. A. Prakash, Hon. General Secretary

Crosswinds force diversion of Hyd-Hbx flight to Bengaluru

HUBBALLI, DHNS

Crosswinds and cloudy conditions over Hubballi forced the diversion of a Fly91 flight and delayed the arrival and departure of several other flights at Hubballi airport on Sunday evening.

The flight from Hyderabad, scheduled to land in Hubballi at 4.30 pm, was unable to do so due to adverse weather.

The aircraft reportedly hovered over the city for nearly an hour before being diverted to Bengaluru's Kempegowda international airport at 7.30 pm.

According to sources, the pilot attempted to land at Hubballi airport but was unable to do so as weather conditions did not improve, prompting the diversion.

Passengers on board were reportedly anxious during the extended holding time.

After weather conditions improved in Hubballi, the same flight departed from Bengaluru and landed in Hubballi at around 9 pm. It departed for Hyderabad at 10.03 pm, against its scheduled departure time of 8:35 pm.

According to Hubballi airport director's office, crosswinds and cloudy weather were the primary reasons for the diversion and delays. They clarified that there were no technical issues with the aircraft or airport facilities. The Fly91 pilot had held the aircraft in the air for nearly an hour, awaiting better conditions, before deciding to divert.

An IndiGo flight to Pune was delayed by about an hour. Flights to Delhi, Pune and Bengaluru also experienced delays due to the crosswind conditions affecting operations in Hubballi and other airports.

100 percentile eludes Karnataka students in JEE Session 2 exam as well

26 students in country secure the perfect score

BENGALURU, DHNS

In the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains (Session 2) results announced by the National Testing Agency on Monday, Vishnu Sai Teja, who had emerged as the state topper in Session 1, repeated the feat. Although Teja appeared in the Session 2 exam to better his previous score, he equalled the score he had secured in Session 1 -- 99.99% -- and bagged an All-India Rank of 28.

Vishnu Sai Teja, who emerged as the state topper in the JEE Session 1 exam, repeated that feat in the Session 2 exam, scoring 99.99%.

Teja, a student of Narayana Co College in Kasavanahalli, Bengaluru, has now set his sights on acing the JEE Advanced examination, and secure admission to a top-tier IIT, where he aims to study Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) announced the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains (Session 2) results on Monday and Vishnu Sai Theja who topped the state in session 1 has retained his position in session 2 also.

"I would like to dedicate my results to my father who is a global engineering leader in an MNC and my mother," said an elated Teja.

Adarsh Kumar Behera too secured 99.99%, emerging as the topper for the state in the SC category.

However, no student from the state secured 100 percentile in the Session 2 exam.

The examination was conducted in 13 languages including Kannada. Session 2 exam was held between April 2 and 8 at 584 centres and 319 cities across the country and 15 cities abroad. It was a computer based test. The Session 1 exam was held in January.

A total of 26 students across India secured 100 percentile in the Session 2 exam, with five students each from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana getting the perfect score, followed by three students in Delhi, while two students each in Haryana and Maharashtra scored 100 percentile.

Those who have cleared JEE Mains are eligible to appear for JEE Advanced scheduled on May 17.

Of the 11,10,904 candidates who had registered for the Session 2 exam, 10,34,330 candidates appeared for the test.

Temple tourism turns river...

Mookambika, from Page 1

Activists point out that many establishments running under the radar during the peak tourism season. The gravity of the situation was captured by taluk health officer Dr Premanand K, who wrote to the local administration that the entire town's sewage was flowing to the river untreated.

"This waste water has sludge and foul smell. It may lead to debilitating impact on the wildlife while people bathe in this water are likely to get infected with diseases," the letter said.

Speaking to *DH*, Dr Premanand said the impact on wild animals, including the long-term effect on the habitat, requires a separate detailed study. "I have urged them to take action right away to end the pollution of the river," he said.

Violation

According to Section 29 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, destroying or damaging a habitat of "any wild animal by any act" is a punishable offence with up to three years of imprisonment along with penalty while bail is highly restricted when the affected animals are protected under Schedule I of the Act".

Kudremukh Wildlife Division Deputy Conservator of Forests M Sivaram Babu said the forest department has been writing to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) seeking intervention. "We will write once again and seek urgent action," he added.

The Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board had set up a sewage treatment plant of 1.5 mld (15 lakh litres per day) capacity which has stopped working. KSPCB has issued notices and restraining orders to the authorities but activists on the ground said nothing has changed.

To a question, KSPCB Environment Officer, Udupi, Keerti Kumar said he was aware of the matter.

"We have given notice to comply. The matter has also reached the National Green Tribunal. The authorities have sought some time to upgrade the STP," he added.

Rich tributes to Basaveshwara in London

BENGALURU, DHNS: UK Deputy High Commissioner to Karnataka Chandru Iyer paid rich tributes to social reformer Basaveshwara's statue near the British Parliament on the occasion of Basava Jayanti on Monday.

Iyer praised the Lambeth Basaveshwara Foundation for establishing the monument, calling it a bridge between the UK and Karnataka. Dr Neeraj Patil, former mayor of the London Borough of Lambeth, urged Iyer to facilitate an official visit by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to the UK to pay tribute at the site of the Basaveshwara statue.

SIR: SC to seek report from Calcutta HC chief justice

SIR, from Page 1

"Lawyers have not been allowed. They only take internet or computer-based applications," he said.

The bench observed that this was not correct.

However, Kamat insisted that citizens were not being allowed to represent themselves.

The CJI expressed displeasure that almost everyday, matters related to the SIR in West Bengal were being mentioned before it. "This is a professional strategy from this side. Every day you people, one after the other," the CJI said.

Kamat said he was making the request regarding an application and urged the bench to list the matter. "This court's orders are not being followed. That is my respectful submission," he said. To this, the CJI said the court will look into the matter. "We will get a report from the chief justice today itself," the CJI said.

Assembly elections in West Bengal will be held in two phases on April 23 and 29, and votes will be counted on May 4.

On April 13, the apex court ordered the Election Commission to issue supplementary revised electoral rolls for the electors whose claims against exclusion were cleared by April 21 and 27, just two days ahead of the two-phase polls.

B'luru civic body cancels 99-yr lease of prime property

Bodhi Society, From Page 1

"When there was a complaint that a part of the property was sublet for a canteen, we sacked the doctor who was in charge of the hospital," an office-bearer told *DH*, adding that the society is using the property for charitable purposes only.

However, the corporation's order refers to litigation arising from the sub-leases. While a writ petition filed by Brains Pvt Ltd was allowed by the high court in November 2025, the court permitted the civic body to initiate appropriate legal action.

The order stated that a joint inspection by revenue and health officials in July 2023 had confirmed violations and recommended cancellation of the lease.

The inspection, it noted, found the property was being used for private commercial purposes, contrary to its original intent of public welfare services such as healthcare and community support.

A show-cause notice was issued in February 2025 asking the society to explain why eviction should not be ordered. The order pointed out that the reply submitted was deemed "untenable" and insufficient to justify the violations.

Based on the findings, the corporation has cancelled both lease deeds with immediate effect, directed the society to hand over the possession within 15 days, ordered eviction proceedings if compliance fails, and initiated recovery of profits earned from unauthorised use, along with damages.

In its reply, the society said it would approach the Karnataka High Court for relief.

"Some vested interests are trying to take possession of the property in Jayanagar as it is in the prime location. We have complied with the lease conditions and the property is being used for medical care only," the office-bearer said, adding the society does not own any other properties in Bengaluru.

"We have in the past provided 13 acres of land for Nimhans in Sakalawara in Anekal. We have also helped in building a burns ward in Victoria Hospital."

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Gursikh Housing Co-operative Society Limited
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ANNOUCEMENT OF ELECTION
Notice is hereby given that the election of Directors (for General, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Women, Backward Classes, Category 'A' and 'B' reserved seats) for the next 5 years will be held on Sunday, 03/05/2026, from 9-00 AM to 4-00 PM at Gursikh Housing Co-operative Society Limited, Bengaluru.
Sd/- (Pawan Kumar S)
Returning Officer
Gursikh Housing Co-opetative Society Limited, Bengaluru
Dated : 20-04-2026
Place: Bengaluru

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PERSONAL

Announcements

ANNOUNCEMENT
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Change of Name

I, BIREDDIGARI ROOPA, Residing at Bengaluru-03 have changed my name as KOTHURU REDDIVARI ROOPA, vide affidavit dated 20/04/2026 before Notary K.S. Bammappanavar, Bengaluru

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CHANGE OF NAME
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I MASTER REKSETH BHARATH S/ o Bharath Babu P & Padmavathi D M R/o No 31 2nd Cross 7th Block Koramangala BLR 560095 have changed my name to RAKSHITH BHARATH vide joint affidavit IN-KA76908705117176Y dtd 10/02/2026

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Accident-hit student gets assistance under CM Relief Fund

BENGALURU, DHNS: A class 10 student from Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), who lost her leg in a road accident while on her way to an exam, was staring at over a Rs 5 lakh hospital bill from a private hospital which her family could not afford, until a last-minute intervention by former minister S Suresh Kumar.

He persuaded the Karnataka government to step in and cover the cost through the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

On March 18, Kusuma, a girl from KGF, met with an accident on her way to the exam and she was ferried to the exam hall in an ambulance.

After coming to know of this incident, Suresh Kumar visited the girl at her residence and promised appropriate treatment. However, the girl started suffering from fever a few days later and was brought to a private hospital in Whitefield for further treatment.

After administering the treatment, the hospital on Monday gave the family of the girl a running bill of Rs 5 lakh. Her father, a farmer, who could not pay the bill was contemplating on paying the bill by selling his kidney. Hearing of this, the former minister visited the hospital and requested the Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, health commissioner and Chief Minister's Media Advisor K V Prabhakar.

Prabhakar promised that the government would pay the bill through the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The hospital informed the family that the girl would have to receive care for at least two days before she is discharged to be shifted to another hospital, where she could receive free treatment. The private hospital agreed to provide the treatment for free for the next two days.

Speaking to *DH*, Suresh Kumar said, "The girl is in a stable condition and I have arranged for free treatment at a different hospital from Wednesday. The father offering to sell his kidney was gut wrenching to hear and I immediately visited the hospital. Through CM's Relief Fund the bill for the hospital will be paid."

Conclave charts plan for future of diagnostics

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) hosted the first edition of the National Diagnostics Conclave on Monday.

The event was convened to chart out a collective vision and strategy for diagnostic innovation and implementation towards greater health equity for India and other lower and middle-income countries.

Panel discussions on the affordable solutions for diagnostics and the surveillance for national programmes, enabling the diagnostics developers and the manufacturers to impact and enabling pathogen prioritisation and pandemic preparedness for India and beyond, were held.

Making suggestions for the future of diagnostics, the experts said that scaling up diagnostics should focus on replicability, repeatability, precision, and accuracy, and that quality for diagnostic manufacturers should be defined as going beyond just meeting the compliance benchmark.

One of the other significant suggestions was for Indian diagnostics developers to go global, and indigenous regulatory frameworks need to be created. This will help in exploring the Global South markets, which will be a unique opportunity for Indian diagnostics that are currently not manufacturing or even designing products for this geography.

Pointing out gaps in the diagnostics market, the experts said that while there is strong support for technology, scalability, regulatory pathway navigation and market penetration channels are missing.

PROBE STATUS

9 cases registered

6 chargesheets filed

1 case Chargesheet in one case pending higher officers' verification

2 cases Awaiting prosecution sanction in two cases

ED raids on Haris' sons put spotlight back on Bitcoin saga

Case may go nowhere due to initial bungling with digital proof

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

In November 2020, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of the Bengaluru police arrested Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki and his associate Robin Khandelwal for allegedly buying hydro ganja on the dark web using Bitcoins.

Nearly six years later, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the sons of Congress MLA N A Haris in connection with the infamous Bitcoin case.

Subsequent interrogations following the initial arrest opened a Pandora's box and revealed the scale of Sriki's cyber-heists.

Between 2015 and 2016, Sriki allegedly breached Bitfinex, a major Hong Kong-based cryptocurrency exchange, siphoning thousands of Bitcoins.

In Karnataka, it was learnt that Sriki exploited a remote code execution vulnerability to steal Rs 11.5 crore from the Karnataka government's e-procurement portal in 2019.

Before that, in 2017, Sriki was accused of hacking into Unocoin Technologies Private Limited in Tumakuru, Karnataka.

It is alleged that Sriki had stolen approximately 60 Bitcoins. At the time, they were valued at over Rs 1.1 crore, with their value as of today standing at around Rs 42 crore.

SIT investigates case

In 2023, the Siddaramaiah government formed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the case.

On May 7, 2024, Sriki and his associate Robin Khandelwal were re-arrested by the SIT in connection with the 2017 Tumakuru case.

A case under the stringent Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (KCOCA) was slapped on him. In July 2024, the duo got bail, while the Karnataka High Court quashed the KCOCA case.

In February 2025, the SIT had questioned Mohammed Haris Nalapad. He and his brother Omar Farook Nalapad were earlier questioned in June 2024 in the same case.

SIT had also questioned senior IPS officer Sandeep Patil, who was earlier heading the CCB, during Sriki's arrest.

Interestingly, Sriki was also present with Mohammed Haris Nalapad, when he attacked Vidvat at Farzi Cafe in Bengaluru in 2018. While Nalapad was arrested, Sriki, who was listed as a suspect in the FIR, absconded.

In October 2025, SIT filed another chargesheet against Sriki in the PokerBaazi hack case.

While it was alleged that some politicians were also involved, none of the probe agencies has arrested or charged any.

Case of fence eating crop

While all this was revealed, what raised eyebrows was the CCB's initial handling of the case, with allegations of severe procedural violations leading to FIRs against several policemen.

It is alleged that Sriki was made to transfer several of the stolen Bitcoins to other beneficiaries.

Following the arrest, the CCB, in January 2021, claimed that it had recovered 31 Bitcoins worth Rs 9 crore from Sriki.

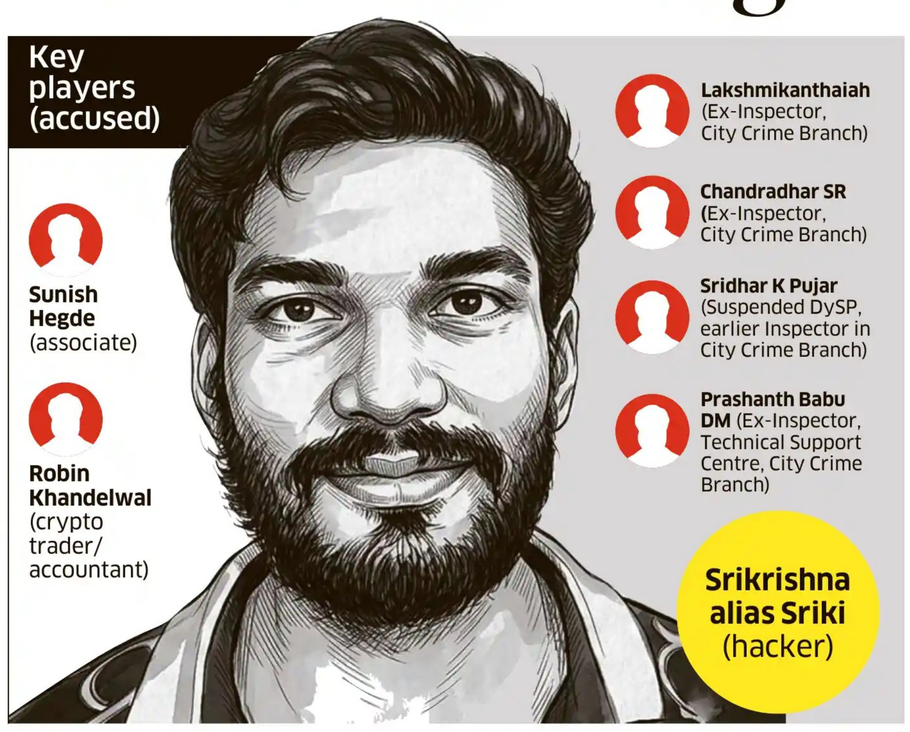
The seized Bitcoins later "disappeared", and the police issued another statement claiming that the hacker had hoodwinked them.

SIT alleged that Sridhar K Pujar (suspended DySP, earlier Inspector in CCB); Prashanth Babu D M (ex-inspector, Technical Support Centre, CCB); Chandradhar S R (ex-Inspector, CCB); and Lakshmikanthaiah (ex-Inspector, CCB) were instrumental in systematically violating legal procedure.

Among other things, Sriki was allegedly kept in illegal confinement, taken to a private company without the court's permission, forced to hack some websites, destroy evidence and was allowed to "liberally" use a private laptop.

A senior officer, who was part of the SIT, told *DH* that the initial handling of the evidence and other factors would make it difficult for the case to reach its logical conclusion.

"There are no significant recoveries of stolen cryptocurrency due to the complex laundering. The digital assets sort of remain in digital limbo. Also, initial mishandling of key digital evidence, leading to the break in the chain of custody, has led to them being inadmissible," the officer said.


Key players (accused)
Sunish Hegde (associate)
Robin Khandelwal (crypto trader/ accountant)
Lakshmikanthaiah (Ex-Inspector, City Crime Branch)
Chandradhar SR (Ex-Inspector, City Crime Branch)
Sridhar K Pujar (Suspended DySP, earlier Inspector in City Crime Branch)
Prashanth Babu DM (Ex-Inspector, Technical Support Centre, City Crime Branch)
Srikrishna alias Sriki (hacker)

Priyank Kharge slams ED, says 'big names' should have been raided

'Federal agencies are puppets of the union govt'

BENGALURU, DHNS

PRIYANK KHARGE
IT and BT Minister

"Is this the first raid? There have been thousands of raids. But the conviction rate is less than 2%. It's nothing but a political tool. Why were they quiet all this time?

Information Technology Minister Priyank Kharge slammed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday for raiding Congress lawmaker N A Haris' sons in connection with the Bitcoin scam.

"If this (raid) is related to the Bitcoin scam, then big names should have been raided," Priyank told reporters.

"The then home minister and those in power...the previous BJP government said nothing happened. But we know what happened," he said.

Priyank admitted that hacker Srikrishna alias Sriki was friends with Haris' son, Mohammed Haris Nalapad. "But Nalapad has said that he has nothing to do with this (Bitcoin). Let's see what the ED says in its charge sheet," the minister said.

Priyank also pointed out that tracing Bitcoin is difficult. "Anonymity is the core of the entire concept of cryptocurrency," he said. "Even the union government hasn't taken a stand on whether or not cryptocurrency is legal." The minister further charged that federal agencies like the ED, IT and CBI were "puppets" of the union government. "Is this the first raid? There have been thousands of raids. But the conviction rate is less than 2%. It's nothing but a political tool," he said. "Why were they quiet all this time?"

Raids based on credible info: Shobha

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje said Monday's raids by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) were based on credible information.

"There's information that politicians, especially those from Congress, have made investments overseas through Bitcoin. It's on this basis that ED has conducted raids. There's no question of conducting raids without any information," she said, accusing the Congress of corruption.

"Congress has been committing economic crimes and the Bitcoin scam is one of them," she said.

A motorcyclist struggles to ride as it rained heavily at Navalur in Dharwad district on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Rain brings respite from sweltering heat in North Karnataka

KALABURAGI, DHNS: Sunday night showers brought huge respite from sweltering heat in some districts of North Karnataka which were recording maximum temperature of over 40 degrees Celisus.

Data from Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) showed that maximum temperature in Belagavi, Bidar, Chitradurga, Kalaburagi, Dharwad, Gadag, Koppal, Raichur, Vijayanagar and Yadgir in North Karnataka dropped to 40 degrees Celsius on Monday – some of these districts recorded maximum temperatures in excess of 44 degrees last week.

Rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, lashed these districts for 30 to 45 minutes on Sunday night. Jindaram Hede (26), along with some of the bulls and buffaloes he was tending, were struck by lightning in Kohinur village in Basavakalyan in Bidar district.

The KSNDMC has forecast thunderstorms accompanied by gusty winds in isolated areas in interior and coastal Karnataka between April 20 and 24.

Meanwhile, hot and humid conditions are likely to continue in the coastal districts over the next five days, although there is a chance of light rain in parts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast light rain in North and South Interior Karnataka in the next seven days.

Forest personnel rescue jumbo stuck in slush

HANUR (CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT), DHNS

The Forest department personnel rescued a wild elephant that was stuck in the slush in the backwaters of Uduthore reservoir in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Sunday.

Three jumbos had entered the backwaters, under the buffer zone of Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary, on Sunday, to quench their thirst. However, due to soaring temperature and to beat the heat, the pachyderms entered the water for a swim but got stuck in the slush.

The Forest department personnel, on patrol, found the elephants stuck in the water and immediately alerted their higher officers. Two jumbos struggled hard and managed to come out of the water but the third one could not get out, despite its effort.

The wild jumbo that was stuck in the slush and suffered from dehydration was provided treatment by the forest department in the backwaters of Uduthore reservoir in Hanur taluk, Chamarajanagar district. DH PHOTO

The officials rushed to the spot, and with the help of the Fire and Emergency Services personnel rescued the jumbo after a day's struggle.

The veterinarian of Nagarahole Tiger Reserve provided treatment to the wild jumbo that had turned weak without food for a whole day.

Bhaskar, Conservator of Forests, Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife division, said that the jumbo that had got stuck in the slush was dehydrated and was being provided treatment. It was rescued with the help of tamed elephant Mahendra and was being monitored, he said.

The other two wild jumbos returned to the forest.

MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary ACF Viraj Hosuru and Range Forest Officer Jitendra took part in the operation.

Man held for vandalising Gandhi bust

HAVERI, DHNS: A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was allegedly vandalised by one Vaibhav Vinod Raikar, 28, near City Municipal Council (CMC) office in the city late on Sunday night. Raikar was arrested by Haveri City police.

"Vaibhav, a resident of the city, is said to be mentally unstable. He was found roaming in the market area Sunday late night. Vaibhav reportedly hit the bust with a cement brick and damaged it. Later, he knocked off the bust to the ground. Based on the complaint by municipal commissioner H Kantharaju, Vaibhav has been arrested," said SP Yashoda Vantagodi.

The incident came to light after CMC staff came to clean the market premises and found the bust of Mahatma Gandhi damaged and fallen on the ground Monday morning.

They immediately informed the police. The police rushed to the spot and secured the bust. It has now been kept in a safe place, the SP added. Following the probe and checking of CCTV camera footage, it came to light that Vaibhav had committed the act, Yashoda said.

Bengaluru student drowns in River Cauvery at Muthathi

HALAGUR (MANDYA DIST), DHNS: A 19-year-old youth drowned while swimming in River Cauvery at Muthathi near Halagur in Malavalli taluk of Mandya district, on Monday. N Shreyas, a resident of Bommanahalli, Bengaluru, is the deceased.

Shreyas was a first-year BCom student of SSRMV College in Jayanagar, Bengaluru.

He, along with five of his friends, had been for the house warming ceremony of their friend at Benamanahalli near Halagur. On Monday afternoon, they went to Muthathi for a swim in the river, when Shreyas got caught in the vortex and drowned. Halagur police have registered a case.

In another incident reported from Arsikere in Hassan district, Prabhakar (45) and his nephew Pratheek drowned in a lake at Hosahalli in Arsikere taluk.

MSIL
Mysore Sales International Limited
(A Government Of Karnataka Undertaking)
PROJECTS DIVISION
MSIL House, 36 Cunningham Road, Bengaluru - 560 052.
Phone : 080-22257649
No.: MSIL/PRJ/026/2026-27 Date: 21.04.2026

E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through e-portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)

Mysore Sales International Limited (A Government of Karnataka undertaking) invites E-tender through E-procurement platform for Execution of Fencing System Works at MSIL Site located at Survery No. 89/17, Amargol Village, Hubballi Taluk, Dharwad District, Karnataka, comprising Barbed Wire Fencing, Chain Link Fencing and Installation of Gates. The documents are available at E-procurement website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** address from **21.04.2026 to 30.04.2026 up to 3.30 p.m.** The pre-bid meeting **Date: 24.04.2026 at 3.30 p.m.**

Sd/- Chief General Manager (Projects Division)

Govemment of Kamataka
Tumkur Urban Development Authority
Belagumba Road, Tumkur - 572 103, Karnataka State.
Ph : 0816-2272280, Fax : 0816-2255761.
email : tudatmk2009@yahoo.co.in; website : tuda.co.in.
No. TUDA/AEE/MACHANHALLI/DRP-01/2026-27 Date: 17-04-2026

Notification

Notification Tenders are invited from eligible civil contractors for the works as per Karnataka Public Transparency Ordinance 1999-2000 and as per services, Standard Bid Document and latest amended provision through e-procurement portal of Government of Karnataka Web Address (https//kppp.karnataka.gov.in) Downloading Tender Documents from e-Procurement Portal of Government of Karnataka. Submission of tenders online through e-procurement portal within the prescribed date and time.

Date of issueing of blank tender forms	Date. 17-04-2026 to Date. 16-05-2026 Time 17-30 Hours
Last date for submission of filled tender forms	Date. 16-05-2026 Time 17-30 Hours
Time and date of technical bid opening	Date 18-05-2026 After 12-00 Am.
Date of opening of financial bids	After technical bid approval

For further details technical branch can be contacted during office hours.

DIPR/TUM/RO-16/26-27/Oysters

Sd/- Urban Development Authority, Tumakuru

Auto unions oppose call to make Kannada proficiency a must

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Auto drivers' unions have opposed the recent call by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) to make proficiency in Kannada mandatory for auto and cab drivers operating in the state, aiming to improve passenger-driver communication and protect regional language culture. A similar mandate has been passed by the Maharashtra government.

Such a mandate is "unnecessary" in Bengaluru, given the cosmopolitian nature of the city crowd, said D Rudramurthy, general secretary of the Auto Rickshaw Drivers' Union (ARDU).

"The city has a dynamic crowd, and given how digitised everything is, Kannada proficiency is no longer necessary to be able to ride an auto in Karnataka. You put the location on an app, and pay through another app; so there is little room left for conversation. Drivers in Bengaluru are mostly multilingual, and they're making a living for themselves. Such a mandate can hurt the livelihoods of thousands," he said.

'Resolve gas crisis'

Auto drivers urged the government to instead focus on helping the community sail through the ongoing gas crisis.

"We don't want this. People are making these claims on our behalf without consulting us. We have bigger things to worry about. The current LPG crisis is impacting the livelihoods of auto drivers everywhere. We want the government to provide aid for us," said C Sampath, general secretary of Adarsha Auto Drivers Union. Overall, auto drivers that *DH* soke to expressed similar opinions, rejecting KPCC's recommendations.

However, a few cab drivers opined that regulation was necessary to bring order into the sector.

"This year alone, approximately 5,000 cab drivers from Kerala have entered the sector, and their movement is going unchecked. There are also a large number of cab drivers coming in from Punjab. We have also come across some cases of drug peddling by out-of-state drivers," claimed Tanveer Pasha, president of Ola Uber Drivers' and Owners' Association, adding that either a language-related or a stricter form of regulation by the government was the need of the hour.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Blurring lines: Politics in the PM's address

Prime Minister Narendra Modi used a national stage, available to him on account of his office, to make a political pitch against the Opposition, a day after the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, in the Lok Sabha. In his address to the nation on Saturday, Modi attacked the Opposition parties, especially the Congress, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and the Trinamool Congress, in strong language for what he called scuttling the idea of women's reservation. That the address was made days ahead of the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal could constitute a violation of the model code of conduct. Prime Ministers address the nation in times of national emergencies or to draw the people's attention to matters of national consequence. The Bill's defeat in Parliament was not such an occasion, and the address amounted to a misuse of office.

The code of conduct intended for the party in power clearly states that "the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided". An address made on Doordarshan, the State broadcaster, criticising the Opposition and calling upon the people to punish the parties may fall under the purview of this provision. The Prime Minister's action has been compared to former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's violation of the model code during the 1975 Rae Bareli election. The Opposition parties have written to the Election Commission of India (ECI) about the alleged violation of the code. But if the Commission's recent record is indicative, action on the complaint is doubtful.

Using a national platform to target the Opposition prioritises political gain over propriety in office

The address stood out for its stridency and the vileness of the attack. The Prime Minister used terminology with emotional and religious overtones, such as *bhrun hatya* (foeticide) and *paap* (sin), to describe the Opposition's position on the Bill. This is unfair because the government was equally responsible for the collapse of the Bill, which was brought forward without any serious consultations with the major Opposition parties. The government knew that the Bill would fail in the House. That it still went ahead with the move exposes its electoral motives. The Prime Minister's address was an exercise in furthering these objectives. Its message and tone revealed that political considerations, not an honest commitment to the women's reservation cause, drove the haste in introducing the Bill.

A case for decentralising justice

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has reignited the demand for a southern bench of the Supreme Court, bringing the issue of equitable access back into focus. Speaking in the presence of the Chief Justice of India, he argued that such a move would bring justice within the reach of lakhs who are effectively excluded by distance and cost. The demand is not new and is anchored in the Constitution itself. While Article 130 recognises Delhi as the Court's permanent seat, it also empowers the Chief Justice, with presidential approval, to designate "such other place or places" for sittings.

The case for reform is strengthened by the Court's mounting burden. With over 92,000 cases pending as of March 2026, according to the National Judicial Data Grid, the strain is evident. The 18th Law Commission offered a pragmatic solution: establish four cassation benches in Delhi, Chennai/Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai to handle routine appellate work, leaving the principal bench in Delhi to focus on constitutional questions. This would rationalise the Court's functioning without diluting its authority. However, resistance persists, driven by institutional anxiety. Concerns about conflicting judgments and about preserving the Supreme Court's character as a singular national pillar have repeatedly stalled progress. These apprehensions, while not entirely unfounded, are overstated. Mechanisms such as larger benches and binding precedents already exist to address inconsistencies. The greater risk lies in retaining a structure that keeps vast sections of citizens at the margins of the justice system. Appeals against High Court verdicts from the northern region contribute a disproportionately large share, while southern states, despite comparable litigation volumes, account for far fewer. Distance has created a structural barrier: travel costs, repeated hearings, and engaging specialised counsel in Delhi deter litigants. As the Law Commission has observed, for many, justice becomes a mirage.

Establishing regional benches of the Supreme Court can cut backlog and make justice more equitable

This inequity has long been flagged by the All India Lawyers' Union. It argues that low appeal rates from southern High Courts do not necessarily indicate acceptance of judgments but rather an inability to challenge them. For instance, if around one lakh cases are disposed of by the Madras High Court, barely 9,000 are challenged. When geography dictates access to the apex court, the promise of equal justice stands compromised. Siddaramaiah's demand, then, is not a regional plea but a constitutional reminder. Decentralising the Supreme Court's appellate function is not about diminishing its majesty; it is about restoring its reach. In a vast and diverse republic, justice must not depend on one's distance from Delhi.

A LONG RESISTANCE

Why Iran did not fall: A cultural explanation

The resolve of a unified people has helped the regime endure the relentless US-Israeli military onslaught

AVINASH THOMBRE

The double-blockaded Strait of Hormuz is going to open sooner or later– that is a certainty. However, the larger question is how the Iranian regime was able to withstand the military firepower and technological might of the United States and Israel combined, and still maintain its hold on power despite over 2,000 so-called precise and not-so-precise, relentless bombings.

Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu started the Iran war off with a bang – not just the bang of bombs and rockets, but the rhetorical bang of their intent to spur the Iranian people to overthrow the Islamic Republic. The new rationale provided was that a despotic culture cannot possess nuclear arms, but the underlying justification was old: Western ideas are morally better. Added to this is the belief that modern technology can easily overcome anything and everything in its way. Netanyahu and Trump believed that it would be a quick two-day affair, and they would have the Ayatollah caught in his bedroom in the middle of the night and brought to New York or Jerusalem blindfolded and handcuffed. That certainly did not happen, and now both the US and Israel, along with the world, find themselves in a mess.

Trump and Netanyahu believed that Iranians already despise the Islamic Republic because of its corruption, its stubborn insistence on a nuclear programme, and the sponsorship of unsavoury regional actors. Furthermore, both felt that Iranians would quickly rise and overthrow the unpopular government. Several theories offered by political and military pundits point out how flawed these assumptions were from the get-go. As the initial two-day swift action extended to a week, then two weeks, and ultimately dragged into a month, everyone is wondering how the world got into this tangled position.

As a social scientist engaged in scholarship and research on intercultural communication for the last 25 years, I can explain why the Iranian regime did not fall through the lens of culture and communication. At the outset, the roots of the present wars are intrinsically linked to the spread of European colonialism beginning in the 15th century. It affected every society it touched as it built new markets, reinvented cultures, and remade social, political, and economic hierarchies. As is well documented, it resulted in the death of millions of people, the enslavement of millions more, and the destruction of our fragile environment – this continues to the present day.

Notwithstanding the enormous research on the colossal problems it created, European colonialism continues

to successfully disguise itself as inevitable modernity and cultural and moral progress. It hides behind the mask of modernity and characterises the tragedies it created as our destiny. The present attack on Iran is a continuation of that cultural and moral discourse that justifies the killing of innocent civilians.

Allies for invaders

Since the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas, every colonising incident is attributed primarily, as famously analysed by Jared Diamond, to guns, steel, horses, and, consequently, to germs. One of the most pervasive myths of the Spanish conquest, according to historian Matthew Restall, is that a few hundred Spanish soldiers brought down one of the world's most powerful empires. The conquistadors are remembered as wily underdogs who overcame impossible odds. The indigenous people are stereotyped as enemies and victims destined to be destroyed. The narrative that is told again and again is that when Hernán Cortés and his men arrived on horseback in their steel armour in the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, King Montezuma and his soldiers were mesmerised and welcomed them as Gods. Well, a handful of Spaniards were able to take over the millions of native soldiers hands down.

In reality, the main reason for the Spaniards' victory was their ability to exploit the existing rivalries and divisions within local societies. It wasn't European cunning, weapons, technology, religion, or even disease that made it possible to defeat the Aztec empire. It was the thousands of indigenous soldiers, including and especially the Tlaxcalteca, who allied with the Europeans and fought alongside them. The Spaniards could not have won the war against the Aztec empire without their indigenous allies, advising them on strategy, and providing them with shelter and reinforcements after defeats.

In the invasions that followed the Mesoamerican conquest, the local indigenous people – in South America, India, Africa, Indochina, or elsewhere – supported the invaders, whether they were the Spanish, the British, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Germans, or the Italians. The colonists won, not because of their disproportionate numbers or their superior technology.

Returning to the present conflict in Iran, we can conclude that, unlike the indigenous groups of the past, Iranians did not support the invaders. They stood united and did not provide any tactical support to the Americans and Israelis, and that made the difference. The Americans and Israelis hoped for a fracture among the locals and tried hard to incite the Kurds and other groups, but to no avail. Their combined firepower failed to break the locals' resolve.

Among other things, it needs to be acknowledged that the strategic geographical location of Iran itself, its vast oil reserves, and the role of small drones played a pivotal role in its resistance. The Americans have destroyed the Iranian navy, air force, and military facilities. However, the unity shown by Iran's people and their cultural ability to endure enormous suffering is the best way to explain how and why the regime survived, and how it did not succumb.

(The writer is an academic and a former journalist)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The Strait and narrow path

My mind has a way of stringing together global crises

MINA ANAND

'What are you thinking about Mina?' asked my husband, seeing me lost in contemplation. "Oh, it's a kaleidoscope of thoughts," I replied. "From the Strait of Hormuz situation, to *nari shakti*, the elections, and the IPL..."

"The Hormuz matter is paradoxical indeed," replied my husband. "By the looks of it, things seem both crude and refined; also, an open and shut case. But the reality is a stark and volatile state of affairs."

"Exactly!" I continued. "It's a global disaster. Out of control. Chaotic. Oil and gas supply chains are in a tangle; prices are going up; diplomacy is going under. World trade is in deep waters, with none to navigate us out of this horror."

"They're all at sea, actually," quipped Anand. "Sadly, yes," I replied.

"Ships are badly stuck. Crews and commerce hunkered down. No one knows who holds the trump cards, if indeed there are any.

No solution in sight. No Solomon to the rescue. This crisis should have been resolved ages back if all concerned had stuck to the straight and narrow path."

"That's ironical, Mina!" exclaimed Anand. "Hormuz is a strait – narrow, indeed. Quite Biblical."

"The virtuous path seems to be in cold storage nowadays," I replied. "Look at the women's reservation issue. One would think that all political parties would field the one-third quota of women candidates, right now, spontaneously. Without waiting for a law to compel them."

"Wow! That would be something," said Anand. "In fact, the current elections should have necessitated the change. But then, I can't see any party taking up the cause. All talk, all from the same flock."

"Yes," I went on, "we have to acknowledge the limitations thereto. But there is always hope that women shatter this glass ceiling too. They did it in cricket. India won the ICC Women's World Cup last year."

"Certainly they did, Mina. That's *nari shakti* for you. And, when women consistently take the field in politics, run for Parliament, and break boundaries, then..."

"...the cup runneth over," I interjected.

"Definitely. It would be another IPL in the making – the 'Indian Power-Women's League'," continued my husband.

"That's an 'IPL' worth watching," I replied. "More interesting than the one on show now. As you well know Anand, I prefer test cricket any day. That has all the drama: the showcasing of skills, temperament, tenacity, *et al*. That's cricket."

"OK. OK. I totally agree with you on this. One thing though, how did we come to Test cricket from Hormuz?"

"You tell me, Anand."

My husband had the last word: "Your mind jumps from one thing to another, Mina. This way and that way. Certainly not the straight and narrow path."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The State must prepare to address monsoon deficit

This refers to 'Monsoon deficit casts a shadow over India' (Apr 20). The recent projection by the India Meteorological Department of a below-normal monsoon, with an estimated 8% deficit driven by the *El Niño* effect, is troubling for India's farm-dependent economy. Agriculture, contributing around 16–18% to GDP and supporting a vast rural population, relies heavily on consistent rainfall. A weak monsoon risks lowering crop output, reducing farmers' incomes, and triggering food inflation. This challenge comes amid economic strain caused by the West Asian conflict, which has already disrupted trade flows and raised input costs such as fuel and fertilisers. The convergence of these pressures could further slow economic momentum. Authorities must, therefore, prepare contingency plans, expand irrigation access, strengthen crop insurance mechanisms, and ensure timely market interventions to stabilise prices and protect both farmers and consumers from deeper distress.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Walk the talk

Apropos 'If Basavanna lived today' (Apr 20), Basavanna, Karnataka's 12th-century social reformer, remains relevant through his numerous *vachanas*. He established the world's first parliament, the Anubhava Mantapa, in King Bijjala's Court, where he served as a minister. He opposed animal slaughter and discrimination based on caste and religion and advocated women's empowerment, offering them key posts in his ministry. The article rightly points out that if Basavanna lived today, he would have used the present-day technology to empower labour, not to devalue workers. Politicians, across party lines, pay tributes to him but fail to follow his path of 'work is worship'. In the present situation, Basavanna perhaps would be in a dilemma about taking up public service.

S Shashidhar, Bengaluru

Reward good practices

Apropos 'K'taka plans pulse push with 3 *dals*' (Apr 20), this is a positive step towards self-sufficiency and boosting farmers' income. However, in the enthusiasm to produce more, there could be excessive use of chemical fertilisers, which must be curtailed at the outset to prevent soil degradation. Simultaneously, the state government must promote organic farming not merely through subsidies but by incentivising the farmers who adopt good agricultural practices.

Rajiv Magal, Ballupete

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

It's all drama. How come a camera was present when the Prime Minister suddenly made an unscheduled stop during the campaign? The entire episode was scripted. He was seen carrying a Rs 10 note in his pocket. Is it believable?

Mamata Banerjee, WB CM (On PM Narendra Modi's pit stop during his campaign to buy 'jhalmuri')

That's what show business is — sincere insincerity.

Benny Hill

TO BE PRECISE

India and Korea must work jointly as global leaders: South Korea President

IN PERSPECTIVE

Women's quota and a complex calculus

Pushing the reservation narrative without displacing male incumbents was a strategy to maintain the *status quo*

PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO JR

It was convoluted logic all the way. Why did Prime Minister Narendra Modi and strategists in the government and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) choose to conjoin the delimitation exercise to expand the Lok Sabha with a bill that mandated one-third reservation for women in Parliament and state and Union Territory legislatures? Did they believe one made it easier to facilitate the other? There was no logical connection between the two. But there is a reason the BJP leaders, their allies, and the Opposition parties are not ready to acknowledge – Modi and Amit Shah did not want to disturb the existing systems. They feared rebellion if the reservation for women were to be implemented with the existing overall numbers.

It seemed the best way to set the reservation in motion was to add the one-third seats meant for women through a delimitation of constituencies. Men giving up their seats to accommodate women always seemed doubtful. Unseating them is not an easy socio-political exercise in a country where women rising as political heavyweights are exceptions.

The strategy to get women in without challenging the male sense of dominance through the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill has failed. However, the government has notified the Bill, more than two years after it was passed, making it implementable forthwith. The Election Commission of India would have to mark out 170+ constituencies – this drawing up of women-only constituencies would require extensive bureaucratic work. The exercise has to be done because Parliament has passed the law. But men who would have contested in those constituencies where now only women can, need to be 'compensated'.

One-third reservation for women is still a compromise because they constitute about half of the country's population. There will be initial resistance and unease across society because the idea of equality has not sunk into public consciousness. It will not be an easy transition for the women either. Politics creates its own social and psychological dynamics across parties, regions, and communities. This is a societal shift that comes with wide-ranging implications.

It might seem that men are now used to the idea of women's reservation in the panchayats and municipal corporations. But the bigger roles and decisions continue to be the domain of men. Very rarely are women chosen to head a party in the country. It has not happened even in the oldest of them, the Indian National Congress. Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi became presidents of the party for special reasons, though they proved their ability once they took control. Jayalalithaa, Mayawati, and Mamata Banerjee, who led the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Bahujan Samaj Party, and the All India Trinamool Congress, respectively, have been exceptions.

Women in the BJP have stopped at the vice-president rank. The Communist Party of India-Marxist and the Communist Party of India have not defied the pattern. The socialists have had some brilliant women leaders, but they all remained in the ranks.

Protecting the current order

Even with the reservation in effect, the change will test women within the existing framework of political parties. The decision on women candidates would still be taken by the party bosses, who are largely men. But these are inevitable hurdles that have to be crossed for a more egalitarian future.

India is not an exception. The status of women in politics remains largely the same across the world, with Scandinavian countries being an exception. The United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand have had women prime ministers who rose from the ranks and took the reins of their respective political parties before they became prime ministers. Despite having had many women prime ministers, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are not apt examples of female political power.

Regardless of his ideological baggage, Modi appears driven by a desire to leave behind something monumental, apart from the puzzling new Parliament House. The women's reservation push is part of this legacy plan. Irrespective of the motive, women and the country would have to acknowledge Modi's part in it. At the same time, the Prime Minister was compelled to address the demands of men in the political arena.

This duality is integral to the context of the government's move. Modi wanted to nurture women contingents of right-wing nationalism and sought credit for a larger policy shift towards women's empowerment, while ensuring these changes do not disrupt the *status quo*.

(The writer is a Delhi-based journalist and commentator)

Counting India: The first digital census and its blindspots

Y NITHIYANANDAM

India's Census 2027, the country's sixteenth decennial census, marks a decisive break from the past. For the first time in the nation's census history, the exercise is set to be fully digital. Gone are the dog-eared record books and the handwritten household registers that enumerators have carried door to door since 1881. In their place are a GPS-enabled mobile application, satellite-based geotagging of buildings, and a citizen-facing self-enumeration portal at se.census.gov.in. Counting over 1.4 billion people across two phases, this census aims to produce the most detailed demographic dataset India has ever generated.

By incorporating new questions on digital connectivity, gender identity, and climate-induced migration, the census moves well beyond the conventional demographic headcount. The data collected will serve as the foundational evidence base for welfare targeting, infrastructure planning, parliamentary delimitation, resource allocation, and disaster management. It will inform virtually every major policy decision over the next decade.

The census is to unfold in two phases. Phase I, the house listing and housing census, runs from April 1 to September 30, with each state and union territory conducting its 30-day listing window within this broader period. Phase II, the Population Enumeration, is planned for February 2027.

Phase I carries the more significant structural innovation. The 30-day window is divided into two distinct fortnights. The first 15 days are reserved for self-enumeration, during which residents may fill in household details using a laptop or mobile phone and submit them via a registered mobile number through se.census.gov.in, which supports 16 languages. The remaining 15 days are for enumerators to visit households, verify submitted data, and record information for those who have not self-enumerated. Upon submission, a unique Self-Enumeration ID is generated, which the household shares with the enumerator during the field visit.

This bifurcated approach reduces the burden on field enumerators, improves data accuracy by placing primary responsibility on the household itself, and signals a broader shift in how the State relates to citizens in administrative exercises.

It all sounds straightforward enough. Yet the process is not quite as simple as it appears on paper. The self-enumeration portal asks residents to pin their household location on a digital map, and enumerators subsequently geotag buildings using the Janganana mobile application. For a significant portion of the population, confidently identifying one's own house on a digital map is not easy—a limitation that gets more pronounced in densely built urban areas, where satellite-based positioning often struggles with signal obstruction from tall buildings, narrow lanes, and closely packed structures. The assumption that location technology will perform reliably and uniformly across India's varied urban fabric deserves far more scrutiny than it has received in official communications.

The house listing questionnaire contains around 33 questions. It covers building materials such as walls, floors, and roof types, along with ownership status, drinking water sources, cooking fuel, household size, and the social category of the head of the household. It also captures asset ownership across radio, television, telephone, computer, laptop, Internet access, and two-wheelers.

This is where one must pause. The asset matrix, while comprehensive by the standards of an earlier era, appears inadequate for 2026. The absence of questions on smartphone ownership as distinct from basic telephone access, on digital payment usage, or on electric vehicles reflects a questionnaire that has not fully kept pace with India's rapidly evolving socioeconomic reality. For a dataset that will inform policy well into the mid-2030s, such gaps risk producing analyses that are outdated even before the final report is published.

Despite these reservations, the case for self-enumeration is strong. The process takes approximately 20 minutes. More importantly, it places the accuracy of your household's data in your own hands. In previous censuses, enumerators occasionally made assumptions about household composition, social category, or asset ownership, sometimes due to time pressure and sometimes due to language barriers. Each such error, multiplied across millions of households, distorts the policy conclusions that flow from the census.

There is, however, one operational constraint worth flagging. Once the household head registers a mobile number on the portal, it becomes linked to the geocoded household record. Residents should be aware of this privacy consideration before they register, as the official communication on this aspect has so far been limited.

The self-enumeration window varies by state, running in 15-day slots between April and September. Early schedules have reportedly included Karnataka, Goa, Odisha, Sikkim, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar, and parts of Delhi in the first half of April. Other states are expected to follow in subsequent windows, though final schedules may vary.

All it takes is 20 minutes. Census data shapes where the government builds schools and hospitals, how it allocates funds, and how constituency boundaries are drawn for the next decade. Citizens can leave that record to someone else's judgment, or can fill it in themselves and get it right. The choice, for once, is entirely citizens'.

(The writer is professor and head of the Geospatial Research Programme, Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru)

Recently, young people have rallied across continents to oust old-guard governments. While many have failed, Nepal's new government promises to do things differently

HANNAH BEECH, BINOD GHIMIRE AND SAJAL PRADHAN

DH ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

'We will turn trauma into something beautiful'

Last September, Bablu Gupta, 28, was dragging bodies away from Nepal's parliament through gunfire. Security forces were stalking young protesters who, at Gupta's urging, held up the pirate flag that is a worldwide symbol of Generation Z resistance.

The defiance of Gupta and his peers during an uprising that toppled the government still flashed last month, but it was joined by a new emotion — hope. He and a group of villagers from Nepal's south, where more than half of youths leave for jobs abroad, gathered to celebrate Holi, the colourful festival of renewal, and to support his candidacy for parliament. Only a few days before the March elections, the men smeared bright powders on Gupta's face. His sweat-misted visage turned green, then purple, then yellow, then red. He blinked. A fine fuchsia fluttered from his eyelashes. Gupta won, and so did many of his Gen Z protest cohort. The elections handed a landslide victory to the youth-driven Rastriya Swatantra Party, giving it a mandate not seen in decades. Nearly 10% of Nepal's recently elected lawmakers are 30 or younger, compared with less than 2% in the last parliament.

The young Nepalis demanded change because they were sick of it all: sick of the corruption that forced them into menial jobs abroad, sick of the nepotism that reserved positions of power for high-caste families, sick of the conspicuous consumption of the gilded class, and sick of a government social media ban that robbed them of a respite from the dispiriting reality of being young, educated and underemployed. "We were desperate," Gupta said. "Not just us in Nepal, many Gen Z around the world. We knew things needed to change."

Gupta was at the forefront of the Gen Z protests last September, which deposed a septuagenarian prime minister and his government in only 48 hours. The uprising cost dozens of lives, many at the hands of the security forces, and catalysed a mass paroxysm of arson that consumed thousands of buildings nationwide. But the ashes of revolutionary destruction also nourished seedlings of hope. A Himalayan nation squeezed between China and India had, once again, transformed.

"We have a lot of trauma from what happened last year," said Gupta, who also served briefly as the youngest Cabinet member in the caretaker administration that followed the revolution. "I think we will turn trauma into something beautiful, something for the future generation."

Nepal's Gen Z rose up amid a global groundswell of disgust for a political old guard tainted by corruption, impunity and an unyielding grip on power. Protests flashed in Indonesia, Peru and Togo. Youths rallied in Morocco, Kenya and the Philippines. Across the world, young people traded memes and tips on how to organise dissent. Weeks after Nepal unseated its leaders, young people in Madagascar sent their president into exile.

The months since then, though, have proved sobering. In Bangladesh, home to the world's first successful Gen Z revolt in 2024, voters in February chose an established party over a younger alternative. In Madagascar, the military leader last month fired the entire interim government, amid accusations of corruption. Protests elsewhere mostly fizzled, though not before lives were lost. Nepal, which dispensed with its monarchy 18 years ago and tamed a Maoist insurgency two years before that, remains an outlier, with its electorate endorsing the political yearnings of the young generation.

On March 27, Balendra Shah, 35, a rapper and former mayor of Kathmandu was sworn in as prime minister. With his trademark rectangular sunglasses and lyrics lifting up the oppressed, Shah is perhaps the most prominent incarnation of a global youth movement against political stasis.

In a victory rich with symbolism, he seized the parliamentary seat long held by K P Sharma Oli, the four-time prime minister deposed by Gen Z.

In one of the new government's first actions, Oli was arrested in March, along with the former home minister, amid an investigation into the killing of protesters in September. (The men have since been released by a court order.) Oli and two other former prime ministers are also under investigation for money laundering.

Still, the durability of Nepal's political transformation is not guaranteed. As the withering of the Arab Spring showed 15 years ago, elites tend to stay entrenched. The systems they built are too profitable to abandon. After Oli's arrest, supporters of his party took to the streets, burning tires and clashing with the police.

Nepal exemplifies nations confronting similar challenges—a demographic youth bulge, climate change, mass emigration and the geopolitical strain of navigating between superpowers. It is shaped by other global trends: Shah, popularly known as Balen, has used nationalist rhetoric to burnish his persona.

Ranju Darshana, 30, missed the final days of campaigning because she gave birth to her first child 10 days before the elections. Her absence did not matter. She was representing the RSP, the party supported by Nepal's youth, and won her parliamentary seat in Kathmandu decisively.

Her victory, the first to be recorded in the recent elections, helps explain the party's rise. For years, Darshana positioned herself as an outsider. At 21, she ran for mayor of Kathmandu, as an unknown candidate raised by a single mother. She paid for her university degrees with telemarketing and gave speeches on issues rarely raised in Nepal: sexual health, queer rights and female empowerment. While she finished third, she captured an unexpectedly high number of votes. For this year's parliamentary elections, Darshana joined the RSP, which grew quickly to include gender activists and social workers.

The appeal of the RSP, founded in 2022, is rooted in that promise. Its *avatar* is Shah, who raps about migration, corruption and an ineffectual political leadership. As mayor of Kathmandu, he swept away trash and straightened up schools. The party's founder is Rabi Lamichhane, a former newscaster who has pitched himself as a symbol of a clean, can-do class.

Neither man is free of blemishes. Lamichhane is embroiled in legal troubles and broke out of prison during the Gen Z protests. Shah, who also joined the RSP for the recent elections, faced criticism as mayor for overseeing the forceful clearing of slums and the arrests of street vendors.

For Darshana, these imperfections were not disqualifying. Her choice to join the party showed the pragmatism of young Nepalis who were willing to code switch from revolutionaries to reformers working within the system. Now in power, they face the same demands for accountability they once directed at others. Members of the RSP have been linked by videos and a leaked official inquiry to the chaos of the Gen Z protests, when many institutions were destroyed by fire.

Pratibha Rawal, an RSP spokesperson, told *The New York Times* that the party had not formulated an official position on the September protests. A third of the ministers in Shah's Cabinet are women. Oli's Cabinet of 22 ministers had only two. Still, for 165 directly elected parliamentary seats, the RSP ran only 16 female candidates.

Nepal's new leadership has promised to create 1.2 million jobs, ensure all citizens have health insurance and develop a fully digital government. Already, it has made health checkups for working abroad more affordable. In the past, labour agencies charged extortionate fees, with officials accused of taking a cut. The new finance minister is a former World Bank economist. But the revolution and promises of reform have not stopped the outflow of people looking for greener pastures.

Nepal is changing. Or rather, Nepal has changed. It is not every day that a millennial rapper is sworn in to lead a nation. Change keeps coming in unexpected ways. Last month, Surendra Pandey, 29, a plumber, put on a frayed suit and went campaigning near parliament with his wife, Maya Gurung, a transgender woman. In the eyes of Nepali law, they are a same-sex couple, the first to have their union legally registered in 2023.

The New York Times

Memes at war

NEELATPHAL CHANDA

The mix of reels, memes and commentary—more than any policy brief – is fascinating enough for a detailed deliberation. Visually striking and sarcastic, these digital artefacts push back against claims made by State actors. They offer a significant scope to examine the evolving role of memes as an expressive and strategic communication tool during the recent Iran-US war, which has triggered seismic uproar across multiple fronts worldwide. From a very traditional point of view, during periods of geopolitical tension, communication has often been defined by a calculative, restrained, and protocol-oriented approach. Recent unfolding exchanges in the form of a digital encounter have given rise to another genre of communication, meme-countering diplomacy, with surprising prominence.

Memes were considered the information product of Internet culture and are often considered babble in the periphery of serious discourse. However, with the advancement of convergent technologies and online spaces, memes have evolved from simple jokes on niche forums into a powerful medium of communication. Over the past two months, the world has witnessed the emergence of memes from cultural artefact to a State-backed strategic instrument as a counter-narrative, diplomatic signal, and psychological weapon.

What makes the US–Iran meme war analytically interesting is the asymmetry between the two sides. As propaganda scholar Nancy Snow put it: "Whoever controls the meme controls the mood." The United States, with its global supremacy in the tactical military arena and media infrastructure, is releasing videos stitched together from *Wii Sports* game clips and the *Mortal Kombat* soundtrack. These contents aim to portray the US as an inevitable and dominant force among the public, especially young individuals, to motivate them in the recruitment process and to serve as a retention tool for domestic consensus. There are allegations that the Trump administration used songs, images, and other copyrighted content in its social media videos without obtaining permission from their creators.

Gazing into the Iranian digital strategy, there is active use of State-affiliated accounts, the social media handles of the Iranian embassy, and an independent YouTube channel named *Akhbar Enfejari* (Explosive News), which has come up with many of these viral AI-generated pieces of content in fluent English, targeted directly at global audiences. A viral video portraying Lego-style Trump in a panicked call with Satan and Netanyahu, the animated content deliberately snatches the gravitas associated with US authority. This reduction of an individual to this symbolic character demystifies US hegemony and its leadership. What is particularly striking, however, is the source of some of this content. Iranian authorities, often criticised for maintaining a tightly regulated digital environment at home, are simultaneously deploying memes with agility in the international arena. It argues that digital spaces are not merely spaces of expression but also instruments of strategy. Memes, in this context, are not accidental; they are perfectly curated to shape perception and engage global audiences.

While examining this development through the lens of soft power, Joseph Nye argues that dominant States often control the power of culture, values, and narratives. Dominant groups often set the cultural agenda, and weaker actors were recipients of global meaning. For decades, the United States has relied not only on military and economic strength but also on cultural industries. Films like Behind Enemy Lines and Tears of the Sun construct a moral geography where US intervention appears necessary and justified.

This war has challenged this narrative dominance and decentralised digital cultures, especially memes that satirise and subvert these representations. Iran, from a military point of view, was outmatched by the US but, through its meme-based communication, attempted to achieve parity in global attention and emotional resonance. Within the global communication order, this marks a significant shift in the restructuring of the information environment in which diplomatic and military strategy must now operate.

The 2026 US-Iran conflict will be remembered for multiple reasons, ranging from global financial uproar to energy security, human cost, and geopolitical tensions in this multipolar world. But it should also be remembered as the site that has propelled memes into a powerful State-backed instrument of persuasion and narrative control, very different from conventional diplomacy. It has bypassed the rigidity of diplomatic language, which was very much restricted to select individuals, and used it to engage audiences at the grassroots level. However, it also raises serious concerns about the convergence of humour and hostility in online spaces and about the responsible use of humour in global diplomacy.

(The writer is an assistant professor at the Department of Media Studies, Christ University)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: APRIL 1976

Bhutto ready to receive Delhi team for talks

New Delhi, April 20
Pakistan Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto has expressed his willingness to receive an Indian delegation to discuss restoration of air links, overflights and measures relating to restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. *Radio Pakistan* reported today that Mr. Bhutto had sent a letter to this effect to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in reply to her communication of April 11. In her letter, Mrs. Gandhi had indicated India's readiness to discuss measures for the restoration of diplomatic relations.

25 YEARS AGO: APRIL 2001

HC sets aside election of 11 MLCs

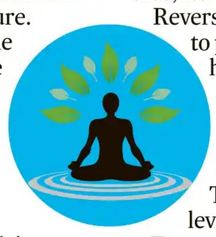
Bangalore, April 20
In a landmark judgment, the Karnataka High Court today set aside the election of 11 MLCs, including a minister of state, terming it "illegal and void". The ruling follows an election petition of Kannada Chaluvali leader and former MLA Vatal Nagaraj, whose nomination papers for the June 2000 election to the Legislative Council were rejected at the scrutiny stage on the grounds that he held an office of profit as the chairman of the Karnataka Border Areas Study Commission. Justice Chandrashekharaiah allowed the petition.

OASIS | CHANDER GUPTA

Finding the path of happiness

All pleasures do not translate into happiness. Consuming alcohol may give us transient pleasure, but it cannot be banked upon for enduring happiness. We may indulge our taste buds, but at the cost of our health. Being the source of ephemeral pleasure, addictions do not sustain happiness. The inappropriate ways of getting stimulation and titillation may ultimately result in agony.

The primary ingredients of happiness are peace and contentment, empathy and compassion, good health, and healthy relationships. A person who loves and begets love radiates happiness. Happiness exudes from not feeling inferior or superior to anyone, as everyone is unique. It emanates from contributing, from service to others. It is derived from living in harmony with nature. The sunshine, the moon, the breeze, the rainfall, and the snowfall give us unadulterated happiness.



Anger, anxiety, stress, fear – all these negative feelings diminish our happiness. Emancipation from despondency and cynicism innately carries us to the realm of happiness.

By default, the state of our existence is imbued with happiness. But along the journey of life, our happiness gets corroded by discord, prejudice, fear, competition, and worries.

Reverse transition from negativity to positivity leads to a path of happiness.

Toxicity might give transient pleasures. The more toxicity in life, the less will be the happiness. Toxicity affects us on two levels – physical and emotional.

For tackling toxicity, we must not only eschew toxic foods and noxious content but also detox ourselves on a regular basis.

We can reduce intake of toxicity if we shun consumption of sugar and alcoholic and caffeinated beverages and regulate exposure to social media. On the other hand, consumption of plenty of water, physical exercises, and meditative practices are recommended for detoxification.

Maintaining balance in everything we do also leads to happiness. The analogy of a single tap having two knobs – one for hot water and another for cold water – will appropriately exemplify balance. It requires a balancing act to open both the knobs to such levels which let the desired level of heated water flow from the tap.

Meitei protest halts Valley life; Nagas & Kukis mull shutdown

GUWAHATI, DHNS: The situation in Manipur continued to remain tense as Meitei organisations enforced a complete shutdown in the Valley for the second day on Monday, neglecting appeals by the state government.

On Monday, markets, schools and other establishments remained shut in the Valley.

The five-day shutdown was called by Meira Paibis, the women's vigilante groups, and other Meitei organisations as a mark of protest against the killing of two children of a BSF jawan in Meitei-dominated Bishnupur district on April 7 and the subsequent killing of three locals in firing by security forces during protests.

Clashes between protesters and security forces have been reported at several places in the Valley since the killing of the two children at Trognlaobi.

More shutdowns

Organisations representing Nagas and Kukis have also decided to enforce shutdowns in their respective areas.

The United Naga Council has announced enforcement of a three-day shutdown in the Naga-dominated districts from Monday midnight to protest against the killing of two Tangkhul Nagas in Ukhrul on April 18.

The Kukis were suspected behind the attack, but Kuki-Zo organisations rejected the allegation.

Several organisations representing the Zomi tribe have called a shutdown between 5am and 6pm on April 22 in Churachandpur district in demand for justice for the killing of a senior Kuki MLA, Vuangzagin Valte.

Man hacks twin daughters to death in UP

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Claiming he feared his daughters would not be cared for after his death, a man allegedly killed his twin daughters in Kanpur in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

The accused, identified as Shashi Ranjan Mishra, strangled the girls before slitting their throats at his apartment in the Kidwai Nagar area.

His wife, Resham, was sleeping in another room with their six-year-old son. The daughters, 11-year-old Riddhi and Siddhi, were sleeping with their father.

Police said Mishra first strangled Siddhi, believing she might raise an alarm if he attacked her sister first. The twins were killed about an hour apart, officials said.

Some reports said Mishra may have given the girls food laced with sedatives at dinner on Friday night.

Special train for BJP voters; chaos for migrant workers

Surat station sees two contrasting journeys

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

From the migrant city of Surat emerged two starkly different scenes in the past 24 hours. In one, complete chaos unfolded as thousands of migrant workers lined up outside the railway station — some jumping fences, others running clueless — all while trying to shield themselves from police batons attempting to restore order. Most were workers from Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, heading back to their native places in such large numbers that the station could not cope.

Later in the night, a contrasting picture emerged. Hundreds of passengers boarded a special AC train, chanting "Jai Shri Ram" and "Vande Mataram", and waving the tricolour in complete normalcy.

Vote for 'change' in WB

The passengers, originally from West Bengal, were returning home to cast their votes for "change" against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Many were BJP supporters handpicked by Surat Bengali associations, which also covered their travel costs as part of electioneering.

On Sunday, massive chaos broke out at Udhna Railway Station in Surat, where thousands of migrant workers stood in queues to catch trains. Most of them are employed in Surat's famed diamond and textile industries, which have been severely hit for over a month due to the Iran war crisis. According to railway officials, the crowd had been swelling since Saturday and went berserk by Sunday afternoon. More than 23,000 people were estimated to have reached the station to catch trains.

Migrants rush at Udhna railway station as they leave for their hometowns amid factory holidays and summer vacations, in Surat. PTI

The massive crowding led to chaos, with people jumping barricades and creating panic and disorder. The Railway Protection Force and Government Railway Police resorted to batons to control the crowd and restore order. According to railway officials, about 23,000 passengers had arrived for six trains scheduled to leave for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

"The passengers were heading to their native places for various reasons — school vacations, social obligations, the continued difficulty of accessing cooking gas at affordable prices, and the overall slowdown. The government couldn't manage the crowd, yet at the same time facilitated a special train that took BJP supporters to West Bengal," said Sharad Zagade, general secretary of the Surat-based Gujarat Sangharsh Majdoor Union and a Congress leader.

Meanwhile, Ramashray Pandey, General Manager of Western Railway, told reporters, "A rumour had spread that there would be no train after 11.30 am and that services had stopped. But that is not true. There is no such shortage of trains at all."

Hours later, from the same railway station, 1,300 passengers departed for West Bengal on a special train. These passengers, originally from various parts of West Bengal and working in Surat, are said to be staunch BJP supporters. They are part of the party's plan to send 5,000 such migrants to vote for "change" in the state.

More trains are expected to take such BJP voters to West Bengal in a few days.

India in touch with Iran for ships' safe passage: MEA

Doval visits Saudi to safeguard interests of New Delhi

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Central government was actively engaging with Iranian authorities to ensure the safety and secure transit of Indian vessels through the Strait of Hormuz following a firing incident last week, said the Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday.

"We continue to be in touch with the Iranian authorities for the safety of our ships, for the safe exit through the Strait of Hormuz," said MEA Additional Secretary Randhir Jaiswal during an inter-ministerial briefing.

Jaiswal emphasised that Indian seafarers' safety and welfare remained a high priority for the government.

On April 18, two Indian vessels — VLCC Samnar Herald and Bulk Carrier Jag Arnav — reported a firing incident while transiting the Strait of Hormuz and were forced to return to the Persian Gulf.

According to the MEA, three Indian-flagged and 14 foreign-flagged vessels are currently waiting in the western Persian Gulf for safe passage. These include four LPG carriers, three LNG vessels, and 10 crude oil tankers.

Jaiswal also said: "On the firing incident, we called in the Iranian ambassador, had a meeting with the foreign secretary. The ambassador said that this would be conveyed to the authorities back home."

So far, nine Indian-flagged ships have safely crossed the Strait and reached India, with one more vessel expected to arrive soon.

In a related diplomatic development, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's direction to safeguard India's strategic and economic interests amid the West Asia conflict.

During the visit, Doval held high-level meetings with Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, and National Security Advisor Musaed Al-Aiban.

The discussions focused on bilateral relations, regional security, stable supply chains, concerns regarding the Strait of Hormuz, intelligence sharing, and strengthening economic ties.

Vizhinjam International Sea Port in Thiruvananthapuram. PTI

Hormuz crisis brings focus to Vizhinjam port

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

The Vizhinjam International Seaport in Kerala has become a much sought-after transshipment point owing to the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.

The Adani-group-run port is flooded with requests from scores of vessels, but it is unable to cater to those as it is already running in full capacity.

The port is strategically located barely 10 nautical miles from the international shipping lane connecting Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Far East. Also, a natural depth of over 20m makes it an ideal one for motherships to operate.

According to port officials, it is already handling 30% more than the estimated capacity, and is unable to accommodate new vessels until the ongoing expansion work is over.

The port started trial operations in July 2024 and was formally commissioned in May 2025. It has already proved its importance by handling 1.3 million TEU containers in one year against an estimated capacity of 1 million TEU.

Once the ongoing second and third-phase expansions are over by 2028, the handling capacity will increase to 5.5 million TEU.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who represents Thiruvananthapuram where the port in located, said in a social media post that the Strait of Hormuz crisis has shifted global shipping eyes to Vizhinjam port, which is currently seeing a massive surge with hundred vessels in queue or seeking calls.

"From handling its 1 millionth TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) in record time to fast-tracking Phase II, Vizhinjam is officially India's transshipment answer to the world. India's first deep-water transshipment hub is no longer just a project; it's a global necessity," Tharoor said.

Considering the huge demand from ships, the plan is to commission the expanded portions of the ports in a step-by-step manner so that more ships could be accommodated as early as possible, said a port official.

Meanwhile, gateway cargo operations of the Vizhinjam port is expected to begin next month after getting the mandatory permissions as well as road connectivity to the port is ready. It will give a boost to the local trade and exports.

SC rejects 'fishing inquiry' into Bengal voter additions

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court on Monday declined a "fishing inquiry" into the alleged addition of 5-7 lakh voters in West Bengal electoral rolls, saying such pleas could be examined only upon the filing of a proper petition through the process.

"We can't have a fishing inquiry," said a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, as senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy mentioned the matter.

She claimed that according to media reports, there was an addition of nearly 5-7 lakh voters in West Bengal using Form 6.

Form 6 is for the inclusion of names in the electoral rolls for a first-time voter or for someone shifting from one constituency to another.

Guruswamy said the addition of voters through Form 6 was not permissible after the cut-off date, and that adding so many voters would impact the upcoming Assembly election in the state.

"You challenge it, we will see," the CJI said.

Guruswamy said they did not have enough information, and that the final electoral rolls were yet to be published.

On this, the bench said, "We can't have a fishing inquiry. We will not entertain like this."

When the matter related to West Bengal Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls was repeatedly mentioned, the bench said, "We should have constituted a separate bench for this."

The apex court is already dealing with a batch of pleas related to the SIR in West Bengal.

The Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court has set up 19 tribunals headed by former HC chief justices and judges to decide appeals against the deletion or exclusion of names from the voters' list.

Earlier, the apex court directed the Election Commission that, wherever the appellate tribunals were able to decide the appeals by April 21 or April 27, as the case may be, such appellate orders shall be given effect to by issuing a supplementary revised electoral roll, and all necessary consequences with respect to the right to vote shall follow.

9.8L voters flagged: Odisha CEO seeks strict verification

BHUBANESWAR, PTI: Odisha Chief Electoral Officer R S Gopalan on Monday said he has asked EROs to undertake a proper verification before names of about 9.8 lakh voters are deleted from the electoral rolls.

The CEO has specifically asked them to put on hold the scrutiny of 2 lakh people who have lodged complaints of wrongful removal from the electoral roll. It is also directed to verify at least 50% of the cases, an official said.

Following receipt of large-scale complaints, the CEO asked the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) of all districts to conduct proper verification of the list. The BLOs have identified around 9.8 lakh names across the state for deletion from the rolls on account of deaths and shifting of residences.

Gopalan said that the BLOs have submitted their reports on absent voters. However, the Booth Level Officers are not authorised to delete names from the electoral rolls. The EROs will take decision in this regard, he said.

The CEO said that usually, 7 to 9 lakh names are deleted from the lists every year in Odisha on account of deaths and shifting of residences. However, this time, around 9.8 lakh people have come under the scanner as the BLOs have already started the mapping process ahead of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, he said.

Meanwhile, Opposition BJD and Congress expressed surprise at the deletion of about 10 lakh voters from the electoral roll ahead of the SIR.

The Additional Chief Electoral Officer asked the EROs to put on hold the Form-7 (on which the voters are deleted) of around 2 lakh people as per the instructions of the CEO, Odisha. They were also told to undertake a thorough verification for deletions, particularly for deceased voters, the letter said.

JEE-Mains: 26 bag perfect 100 score

NEW DELHI, PTI: Twenty-six candidates have bagged a perfect 100 NTA score in the engineering entrance exam JEE-Main, the National Testing Agency (NTA) announced on Monday.

Twenty-four candidates had achieved the feat in 2025.

While over 13 lakh candidates had appeared in the first edition of the crucial exam in January, more than 10 lakh candidates had appeared in the second edition in April. Over eight lakh common candidates appeared in both sessions.

Among the candidates who have secured an NTA score of 100, five each are from Andhra and Telangana, followed by four from Rajasthan, three from Delhi and two each from Maharashtra and Haryana.

EC urged to probe Modi's address to the nation

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Around 700 leaders, activists and former bureaucrats on Monday approached the Election Commission of India, demanding an inquiry into Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation two days ago, in which he attacked Opposition parties over the 33% women's quota.

They claimed it was a "clear and blatant" violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The complaints stated that the use of official government machinery and mass media by the Prime Minister "for what amounted to electioneering and partisan propaganda" during the operation of the MCC constituted a "serious breach". It added that such action provides an "undue advantage" to the party in power and undermines the level playing field essential for free and fair elections.

They said that if the address was delivered without the EC's prior permission and constituted a violation of the MCC, the poll body should immediately order the removal of the speech from all official records, government websites and media platforms, and take suitable action.

The complaint, citing Section VII of the MCC on the party in power, was signed by 714 people, including Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, former bureaucrats Najeeb Jung and M G Devasahayam, academicians Zoya Hasan, musician T M Krishna, writer K Satchidanandan, and activists Anjali Bhardwaj, Harsh Mander and Yogendra Yadav.

They said the address was broadcast live on official government platforms such as Doordarshan, Sansad TV and All India Radio.

Maintaining that this amounted to a violation of the MCC, they urged the EC to immediately initiate an inquiry into the content and manner of the address and examine its transcript. They demanded necessary action to uphold the sanctity of the electoral process and ensure a level playing field for all parties and candidates.

"If the address to the nation was delivered with the prior permission of the EC, then equal time should be given to other parties," the complaint said.

HEALING PATH

NCW moots registry, real-time tracking for acid attack survivors

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has recommended the creation of a National Acid Attack Case Registry with real-time dashboards to track the progress of FIRs.

This is a part of the wide-ranging recommendations it submitted to four Central ministries for the rehabilitation, care, and justice of acid-attack survivors.

The recommendations — submitted to the Ministries of Home Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Women and Child Development, and Social Justice and Empowerment — also call for mandatory implementation of Golden Hour protocols for acid attacks across all hospitals in the country.

The NCW said the registry would integrate FIR with medical and compensation systems, and enable periodic public reporting to ensure transparency and accountability, according to an official statement released on Monday.

The recommendations stem from the commission's round-table consultation titled "Navjeevan: A Consultation on Care, Justice & Dignity for Acid Attack Survivors", held in January.

Among its key proposals, the NCW has called for free and lifelong medical treatment — including reconstructive surgeries, institutionalised psycho-social support, and recognition of acid-attack survivors under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

It also suggested the issuance of disability certificates, integration into the Unique Disability ID system, and automatic linkage with welfare schemes, reservations, and social-protection benefits.

On the legal front, the commission has called for mandatory Zero FIR registration — which would allow acid attack survivors to file a case anywhere in the country, irrespective of where the attack took place — as well as simplified FIR procedures, fast-track investigation, trial with defined timelines, and deployment of dedicated legal officers with strengthened evidence protocols.

The commission has also called for the expedited passing of the Victims of Acid Attacks Bill, 2022, which remains pending.

On compensation, the NCW recommended a uniform national framework with time-bound disbursal, Direct Benefit Transfer linked to FIR registration, enhanced compensation based on severity of injuries, monthly pensions for survivors, and a transparent online grievance redressal mechanism.

For livelihood support, the commission recommended skill development, digital literacy programmes, and entrepreneurship support for survivors under existing government schemes.

The NCW also called for stricter regulation of acid sales through stringent licensing requirements.

SC dismisses Umar Khalid's review plea against bail denial

NEW DELHI, DHNS

"Having gone through the review petition and also the documents enclosed, we do not find any good ground and reason to review of the judgment dated 05.01.2026"

The Supreme Court has dismissed a review petition filed by former JNU student and activist Umar Khalid against a verdict that declined him bail after finding that there were reasonable grounds to believe the allegations levelled against him in connection with the conspiracy behind the 2020 Delhi riots.

Umar Khalid

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria rejected the review petition as well as the application for open court hearing in the matter.

"Having gone through the review petition and also the documents enclosed, we do not find any good ground and reason to review of the judgment dated 05.01.2026," the bench said in its order on April 16.

Remedy apparent error

As per the Supreme Court's rules, review petitions are considered by judges, who delivered a judgment or passed an order, in chambers to remedy an apparent error or a resultant grave injustice that resulted from its decision.

Earlier, senior advocate Kapil Sibal for Khalid has sought open court hearing in the matter.

On January 5, the court refused to grant bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the alleged larger conspiracy case linked to the 2020 Delhi riots. Both the accused were arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

The court had then said Khalid and Imam stood on a qualitatively different footing as compared to the other accused and ordered the release of five other co-accused after drawing a clear distinction in their alleged roles.

The other accused in the case were Gulfisha Fatima, Meera Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmed.

President prorogues both Houses of Parliament

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were on Monday prorogued by President Droupadi Murmu, two days after the House was adjourned sine die.

"The Lok Sabha, which commenced its seventh session on January 28, has been prorogued by the Honourable President on April 20," a press release issued by the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

A similar notification was issued by Rajya Sabha secretariat. "The Rajya Sabha which adjourned sine die on the 18th April, 2026 has been prorogued by the President on the 20th April, 2026," the notification said.

The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned sine die on Saturday.

The Lok Sabha saw the defeat of a crucial bill to implement 33% quota for women in legislatures by increasing the strength of the Lower House to 816 through a delimitation exercise.

The session, which began on January 28, saw the passage of the Union Budget and Demands for Grants.

DH DECCAN HERALD

Political Theatre

You (Modi) have suddenly started loving Jhalmuri. But what about people being prevented from eating fish and mutton in BJP-ruled states?

Poll vault

Campaign bot

TVK's Coimbatore (South) candidate V Senthilkumar has found a novel way to campaign. On the penultimate day of the election campaign, he deployed a robot to seek votes on his behalf. Draped in shawls matching the party's colours, the robot accompanied him as he canvassed at Race Course Road in Coimbatore on Monday. Earlier, another TVK candidate had used a full hologram of actor and party chief Vijay during campaigning.

E T B SIVAPRIYAN, CHENNAI

Meet the leader

S P Velumani
AIADMK
Thondamuthur

In the 2021 Assembly elections, when the AIADMK lost ground across much of the state, it swept all 10 seats in Coimbatore district, taking some sheen off the DMK's victory. The man behind that feat was SP Velumani, the Coimbatore strongman whose influence spans western Tamil Nadu.

Velumani was among the most powerful ministers in the AIADMK government from 2017 to 2021, bolstered by his close ties with then Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, both belong to the entrepreneurial Gounder community.

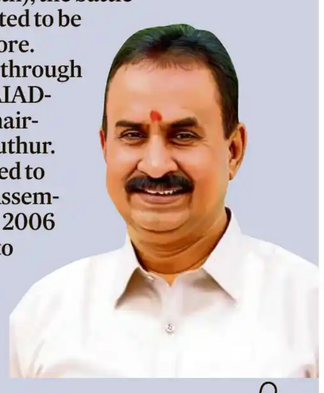
A trusted lieutenant of EPS, Velumani wielded such influence that many dubbed him the "Chief Minister for Coimbatore".

A grassroots leader with a keen ear for local sentiment, Velumani was inducted as a minister in his second term as MLA in 2011 by J Jayalalithaa, who allotted him the lucrative Municipal Administration portfolio.

His groundwork and political strategy helped the AIADMK buck the broader state trend in 2021. However, under his watch, the party slipped to a distant third in the 2024 elections, when then BJP chief K Annamalai emerged runner-up to the DMK's Ganapathi P Rajkumar.

Velumani's political acumen now faces a stern test against a resurgent DMK in Coimbatore, led by V Senthil Balaji, who has shifted from his native Karur to the industrial hub for a direct contest with the AIADMK-BJP alliance in its bastion.

With Balaji contesting from Coimbatore (South), the battle this time is expected to be tougher than before.



Velumani rose through the ranks of the AIADMK, serving as chairman of Kuniyamuthur. He was first elected to the Tamil Nadu Assembly from Perur in 2006 and later moved to Thondamuthur, winning three consecutive terms since 2011.

Trivia

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, there were 875 complaints of booth capturing in West Bengal. No case was substantiated, and complaints were disposed of as per the report of the concerned District Electoral Officer and Superintendent of Police/Commissioner of Police, the Union government told the Lok Sabha.

Parched & neglected Purulia seeks change

Poverty, corruption, acute water shortage turn voters against Trinamool

FROM THE GROUND

KALYAN RAY
JOYPUR (PURULIA), DHNS

Begunkodor railway station. DH PHOTO

Outside Begunkodor railway station, Basudeb Gorai, owner of Ma Durga Line Hotel, is cut up with 15 years of Trinamool rule.

A commerce graduate from a south Kolkata college, Gorai could not find a school teacher's job, worked with a salary of Rs 2,000 per month in a local school and ended up running the roadside joint. Because of Begunkodor's fame as a haunted site, he gets some customers, but the income is irregular and nowhere close to what he thought he would earn while pursuing his degree.

"For the last 15 years, the TMC government did nothing to give us jobs. What's wrong in trying BJP once? It can't be worse than the current situation," he said.

Gorai is not alone. Public sentiments are similar across the nine Assembly constituencies in Purulia.

The TMC government's failure in providing essential services like water in a parched district, large-scale corruption and a lack of livelihood options come under attack in every debate. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the latest to jump on to the bandwagon.

"Mamata Banerjee sold you the dream of Raghunathpur industrial zone. But in the TMC raj, no work gets done without a cut. When a cut is demanded, where will the industry come from? That's why the industry is suffering here. Factories don't come out of fear. Factories come with trust; factories run on trust. Investment comes with trust," Modi said at a rally in Purulia town.

For years, Raghunathpur industrial zone — projected by the West Bengal government as the centrepiece for Purulia's economic development — remains severely under-occupied.

It was at the heart of Mamata Banerjee's Jangal Sundari Karmanagari project that sought to attract an investment of around Rs 70,000 crore and produce 1.5 lakh jobs. The reality, however, is different with only two functional industries, one of them being a central government power unit.

Purulia is currently classified as Bengal's most backward district, according to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index.

The western-most district consistently ranks at the bottom across several critical poverty and deprivation metrics.

"Forget the industry, we don't even get water in our houses. Farmers rely on monsoon to have one paddy crop in a year. In a bad monsoon year, they have a problem," said Samir Mukherjee, a local who retired from CPWD.

For years, there have been plans to bring water to Purulia from Panchet (Damodar river) and Mukutmanipur (Kangsabati), but it is yet to benefit people.

Of the nine Assembly constituencies in Purulia, TMC won seven in 2016 while the Congress bagged two. Five years later, BJP got six seats and TMC the rest.

WEST BENGAL
Assembly Poll

This time, BJP hopes to consolidate further because of the support from the Adivasi Kurmi Samaj that controls nearly 30% votes in almost all the segments.

A dominant caste group across the state, the Kurmi's demand for ST status received backing from the state BJP.

The Congress too is hopeful of regaining people's trust, putting Trinamool Congress further on the backfoot.

In Malda, Congress leans on legacy

FROM THE GROUND

SUMIT PANDE
MALDA, DHNS

Ghani Khan's ancestral house in Kotwali, Malda. DH PHOTO

Former Union minister A H Khan Choudhury passed away peacefully at a nursing home in Kolkata two weeks ago. Dalu da, as he was fondly called, was laid to rest beside his brother, Congress patriarch from Malda, ABA Ghani Khan Choudhury (Barkat da), at a mausoleum adjoining the family home in Kotwali.

The sprawling mansion, in the midst of a congested locality, some 10 km from the district headquarters in English Bazar, bears witness to the Ghani Khan family's long dominance over district politics.

One of India's longest-serving Railway Ministers, Ghani Khan was a career Congressman, serving in the cabinets of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. Some say he brought the Railway Ministry to Malda. Locals benefitted, making Kotwali the go-to destination for one and all.

Despite Left dominance in West Bengal from 1977 to 2011, Malda, with over 50% Muslim population, remained firmly aligned with the Congress. After delimitation in 2008, the district was divided into two constituencies—Maldaha Uttar and Maldaha Dakshin.

Maldaha Uttar, which has pockets of tribal population, was wrested by former Left leader Khagan Murmu for the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Maldaha Dakshin remains with the Khan family, represented in the LS by Hasim Ali Khan's son, Isha Khan Choudhury.

"We will go to the people with our agenda. We stand for change, honesty and development," Khan said.

In the 2021 Assembly polls, the Congress was routed in the district, with its vote shifting decisively to the Trinamool Congress. By the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a section of the minority community voted for the Khan family to hand Congress its lone seat in West Bengal. This time, the Special Intensive Revision by the EC has led to large-scale deletions from electoral rolls, leaving many voters, especially minorities, anxious.

The Congress is worried that religious polarisation between Trinamool and BJP may push it out of the contest. An encore of the 2021 elections does not augur well for the grand old party, when it lost even the Ghani Khan family bastion, Sujapur.

Mausam Noor, another niece of Ghani Khan, is also back in the Congress after a short stint in the Rajya Sabha on a Trinamool ticket.

The three-time MP is now contesting from Malatipur in Maldaha Uttar. Locals see her shift from Sujapur as a sign of a truce between Khan cousins, Isha and Mausam. While Isha may try to hold onto his seat in 2029 from Maldaha Dakshin, Mausam may try her luck in the north.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi campaigned for a day for the first phase of elections. He held one meeting in Malda, where the party is caught in a triangular contest with the BJP and the Trinamool.

Nadar Christian votes in Vilavancode on Cong radar

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
KANNIYAKUMARI, DHNS

Congress candidate from Vilavancode T T Praveen greets voters during a campaign.

The Congress in Vilavancode Assembly constituency in Kanniyakumari is hoping to resist both BJP and actor-turned politician Vijay's party TVK by ensuring the support of the Nadar Christian community.

The party's candidate here is T T Praveen, secretary of the Church of South India (CSI) South Kerala diocese. So, the party is looking at the Nadar Christian vote bank, which is crucial in this part of the state.

Praveen will be taking on three-time Congress MLA S Vijayadharani, who switched over to BJP in 2024 after being denied Congress legislature party leader post.

BJP's campaign against Praveen is focusing on his being a non-Tamilian as well as a series of criminal cases and an Enforcement Directorate probe against him.

The saffron party is also harping on the lineage of Vijayadharani, who is the great-granddaughter of the renowned Tamil poet Kavimani Desigavinayagam Pillai.

TVK's entry into the electoral fray has triggered concerns that the party might eat into Congress's vote bank.

Praveen counters the criticisms. "People will reject the campaigns that I am an outsider. We also do not see any threats like vote splits as TVK is insignificant here," Praveen told *DH* during his campaign.

Even as the Congress hopes to cash in on Praveen's CSI church connection, the church witnessed infighting over the last few years, triggered by alleged financial irregularities in church-run institutions. Praveen is facing an ED probe in relation to the irregularities.

TAMIL NADU
Assembly Poll

Vijayadharani — who wrested the seat from CPM and presented a thumping victory for the Congress in 2011, 2016 and 2021 elections — claims that the good rapport that she established with people would help the lotus bloom here.

However, some voters were unhappy with her becoming a turncoat.

Moreover, the 2024 Assembly by-poll subsequent to Vijayadharani's resignation had witnessed Congress candidate Tharahai Cuthbert winning with a huge margin against BJP's V S Nanthini.

It is to be seen whether the Congress's strategy pays off.

DMK's northern stronghold faces AIADMK-PMK surge

FROM THE GROUND

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
VILLUPURAM, DHNS

AIADMK leader Edappadi K Palaniswami, accompanied by PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss, during a campaign in Edappadi. PTI

Northern Tamil Nadu, with 64 Assembly constituencies across 11 districts, is the largest region in the state where the DMK and AIADMK have fought pitched battles in their pursuit of Fort St George, the seat of the state government.

It is also the stronghold of the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), representing the Vanniyars, and the prominent Dalit party Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK). The contest here is always polarising, driven by long-standing rivalry not only between the two communities but also between the two parties.

North Tamil Nadu
DISTRICTS: Tiruvallur•Kanchipuram•Chengalpattu•Ranipet•Vellore•Tiruppattur•Tiruvannamalai•Krishnagiri•Dharmapuri•Villupuram•Kallakurichi
CONSTITUENCIES: 64

2021 RESULTS	DMK+	AIADMK+
	46	18

In the 2021 elections, the DMK alliance swept the region, winning 46 of the 64 seats. The AIADMK and PMK managed just 18, despite the then government's last-minute legislation granting 10.5% internal reservation to Vanniyars.

In this region, the DMK faces not only the resurgent AIADMK and PMK but also the TVK, whose impact is expected to be significant here, with youth from rival groups rallying behind actor-politician Vijay.

"In our village, which has about 1,000 votes, at least 250 to 350 people are likely to vote for Vijay — not just Dalits, but sections of Vanniyars and others too," Mathi, an auto driver, told *DH*.

In several villages, caste often trumps candidates or parties: Vanniyars openly declare they will not vote for the VCK, while Dalits categorically reject the PMK.

It is not mere cinema craze; fatigue with the two Dravidian majors is driving youth across communities towards Vijay.

The PMK, wielding considerable Vanniyar influence, is a clear value-addition for the AIADMK. Though perceived as split between founder S Ramadoss and his son Anbumani, Vanniyar votes are unlikely to fracture vertically, despite the father's faction fielding candidates.

The AIADMK is banking on its traditional support base and anti-incumbency votes.

But the DMK remains inherently strong here. Even in 2016, when the AIADMK returned to power, northern TN favoured the DMK, with its alliance winning 34 of the 64 seats and pushing the AIADMK to second place.

POLL DIGEST

Rs 100-cr gap in Vijay's affidavit: HC notice to I-T dept reply

▸ **CHENNAI, PTI:** The Madras High Court on Monday ordered notice to the I-T department on a petition against TVK chief C Joseph Vijay that sought a direction to the tax authorities to conduct an enquiry into "contradictory" disclosure of total value of assets in the nomination papers for the April 23 Assembly polls.

The petition sought a direction to the Income Tax officials over Vijay's affidavits filed before the Returning Officers of Tiruchirappalli (East) and Perambur constituencies by the actor-turned-politician.

The matter came up for hearing before a division bench comprising Chief Justice S J Dharmadhikari and Justice G Arulmurugan.

During the proceedings, the bench observed that showing a difference of approximately Rs 100 crore in asset value between two different constituencies is a "serious irregularity".

The petition was filed by V Vignesh, a resident of Vyasarpadi and a registered voter in the Perambur constituency. According to the petitioner, Vijay, who is contesting from both Perambur and Tiruchirappalli East in the April 23 Assembly elections, submitted conflicting financial data in his Form-26 affidavits.

EC vows fair polls in Bengal

▸ **NEW DELHI, PTI:** Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Monday asserted that the Election Commission will leave no stone unturned in holding free, fair and transparent polls in West Bengal where Phase 1 of voting will take place on April 23.

Interacting with officials involved in poll management, the CEC said the polls will be fear-free, violence-free and intimidation-free. Officials said the poll authority will ensure elections are also inducement-free and "booth jamming free". No employee of the state government, local bodies or autonomous bodies will be allowed to influence the electoral process, they said.

Congress alleges strong room violation in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: The Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala alleged that a strong room in Kozhikode, where electronic voting machines (EVMs) were kept, was opened in violation of norms on Monday.

The returning officer, however, said that it was not the EVM room that was opened. Another nearby room containing election records was accessed to update software data from those records. The officer added that this was done in the presence of agents of the candidates.

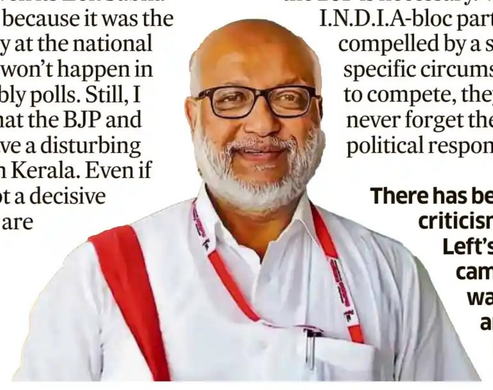
Congress MP MK Raghavan said even state government officials on election duty entered the room. Moreover, it was opened before the candidates arrived. As per norms, the entire premises where the EVMs are kept should be sealed, with only security personnel allowed in.

'Expect history in Kerala, advance in WB'

The Left's electoral map in India has shrunk in the past decade. This election season, CPM general secretary **M A Baby** spoke to *DH*'s **Shemin Joy** on his party's prospects in Kerala, its stronghold, where it is seeking an unprecedented third term, and West Bengal, where it is trying to regain lost ground. Excerpts:

What are your expectations from Kerala, where the polling is over?
Those who ignore the fact that the LDF government's mark is evident in both welfare and infrastructure initiatives may claim there is anti-incumbency sentiment in Kerala. There are some fabricated criticisms against those leading the government. I believe Kerala has enough political awareness to recognise such narratives. I expect history in Kerala with an LDF victory for the third time.

The BJP is discussed as a significant player in Kerala. Will it improve its position?
I don't expect the BJP to open its account. The BJP has not grown enough to significantly influence Kerala elections. Its Lok Sabha and Assembly victories were largely due to the UDF's direct or indirect support. Even its Lok Sabha votes were because it was the ruling party at the national level. That won't happen in the Assembly polls. Still, I must say that the BJP and the RSS have a disturbing presence in Kerala. Even if they are not a decisive force, they are influential enough to require serious opposition from secular and democratic forces.



The Congress' Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge have accused the CPM of being the BJP's 'B-team'.
They have levelled baseless allegations. The CPM works within the I.N.D.I.A bloc because defeating the BJP is necessary. When the I.N.D.I.A-bloc parties are compelled by a state's specific circumstances to compete, they should never forget their national political responsibility.

There has been criticism that the Left's Kerala campaign was centred around Pinarayi Vijayan, which the CPM usually avoids.
This is not accurate. He has been the chief minister for 10 consecutive years, something unprecedented in Kerala. Naturally, that reflects in the campaign. However, he functions within the party's structure.

The Left Front is contesting alone in West Bengal. What is different this time?
Previously, we had some level of understanding and adjustments with parties, including the Congress, to fight both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress. This time, there has been an expansion within the Left with the entry of the CPI(ML) Liberation.

How will you perform in Bengal?
The Left will demonstrate its relevance in Bengal politics and make a notable advance in this election.

'Well-educated getting duped': SC flags rise in 'digital arrests'

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court of India on Monday said it was shocking that well-educated people are getting duped in cases of digital arrests.

Attorney General R Venkataramani mentioned the suo motu case concerning victims of digital arrest before a bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi.

The CJI, however, flagged a recent case of an elderly woman who was duped of her entire retirement benefits in one such incident.

"It is shocking that well-educated people are getting duped like this," the bench said.

The A-G submitted that an inter-departmental meeting has been held and that the final meeting will take place soon. He added that the authorities concerned are moving very fast. He urged the SC to take up the suo motu case for hearing on May 12.

The CJI referred to the case of an elderly woman whom he knew in his official capacity. "Unfortunately, her entire retirement benefits have been duped," he said.

Delhi HC judge rejects Kejriwal's recusal plea in excise case

Says a political leader cannot be allowed to damage an institution without any basis

NEW DELHI, PTI

Delhi High Court judge Swarana Kanta Sharma on Monday refused to recuse herself from hearing the liquor-policy case as she rejected the pleas of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and others for her withdrawal.

In the pronouncement that lasted for more than an hour, Justice Sharma said a litigant cannot be allowed to judge a judge without any material and judges cannot recuse themselves to satisfy a litigant's unfounded apprehension of bias.

She added that a political leader cannot be allowed to damage an institution without any basis, as a personal attack on a judge is an attack on the judiciary itself, and "a politician cannot be permitted to cross the boundary and sit in judgment over the competence of a judge".

> A personal attack on a judge is an attack on the judiciary itself, and a politician cannot be permitted to cross the boundary and sit in judgment over the competence of a judge.
>
> JUSTICE SWARANA KANTA SHARMA

Justice Sharma concluded that the narrative in the pleas for her recusal was based on conjectures and "perceived inclinations", and cautioned that the case could open the doors for "powerful litigants to attack judges" and their families for "forum shopping".

"This court will stand up for itself and the institution... I will not recuse," the judge said, adding that she would decide the CBI petition against the discharge of the accused in the excise-policy case without being affected by the recusal pleas.

During the day, Justice Sharma, however, recused herself from hearing a 2025 bail plea of former AAP MLA Naresh Balyan in a Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) case pending since 2025.

Without specifying any reason, she directed that the matter be placed before another judge on April 23.

Kejriwal had raised several objections against Justice Sharma hearing the CBI's plea against his discharge in the liquor-policy case, including that she had earlier denied him relief on his petition challenging his arrest and refused to grant relief on the bail pleas of other accused, including Manish Sisodia and K Kavitha.

In her judgment, Justice Sharma countered every contention raised by Kejriwal and others, stating that the recusal applications did not come with any evidence but "aspersions, insinuations and doubts" on her integrity and impartiality, despite a judicial career of 34 years.

Responding to the objection that the court passed an ex-parte interim order on the CBI's petition on the very first day, Justice Sharma said such orders were even passed in favour of AAP leaders in other cases.

The judge also junked Kejriwal's apprehension of bias on the basis of her attendance at events of the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad — an RSS-affiliated confederation of lawyers — observing that these are professional functions organised by lawyers that are attended by several judges and not political events.

Justice Sharma asserted that judges cannot be placed in an ivory tower and expected to lead a life in seclusion, and ruled that accepting an invitation to deliver a lecture or interact with younger members of the bar cannot be used to insinuate political association.

She also cautioned against allowing the opening of the floodgates for litigants who want to sow seeds of "distrust, suspicion and mistrust" in this manner.

Rahul citizenship row: HC judge steps aside, flags complainant's 'unfair' comments

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Allahabad High Court (Lucknow bench) Judge Justice Subhash Vidyarthi, who was hearing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's dual citizenship matter, recused himself from the case on Monday citing attacks on him by the complainant, Karnataka BJP worker Vignesh Shishir.

Rahul Gandhi

This came after the judge stayed his own order directing for an FIR against Rahul on Saturday, stating that the matter should not be decided without hearing the other party.

Justice Vidyarthi took strong objection to the comments by Vignesh on social media following his decision to stay his order. He orally observed that the remarks amounted to "unfair treatment" towards him, and that they were not acceptable.

While referring the matter to the Allahabad HC Chief Justice to constitute a new bench to hear it, Justice Vidyarthi said that the complainant had used him to gain "political mileage".

Vignesh, apparently upset over the order, said on social media that he would complain against the judge to the Chief Justice. Vignesh also made some objectionable remarks on Justice Vidyarthi.

The judge, a day after directing registration of an FIR against Rahul, stayed his own order, stating that notice should be given to the other party before passing any order. The court fixed Monday for further hearing of the matter.

The court had passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Vignesh challenging the order of the special MP/MLA court that, in January this year, rejected his petition seeking revocation of Rahul's Indian citizenship and registration of an FIR against the Congress leader, who he claimed was also a British citizen.

In January, the special MP/MLA court here, while rejecting Vignesh's petition, said that it did not have jurisdiction in the matter, and added that the petition was a misuse of the judicial process.

The petitioner had contended that Rahul was a British citizen, claiming that he had copies of documents that supported his contention.

SC junks PIL seeking to declare Netaji Bose 'national son'

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court on Monday declined to entertain a public interest litigation seeking a declaration that freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army secured independence for the country.

The petitioner also sought to declare Netaji the "national son" and to observe October 21, 1943 (INA's foundation day), and January 23 (his birth anniversary) as national days.

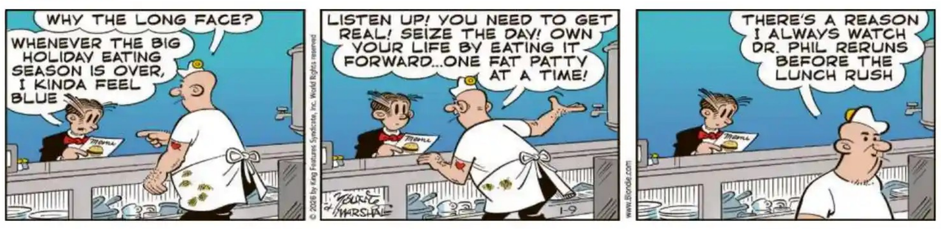
A bench dismissed the plea after noting that a similar PIL filed earlier by the same petitioner had already been dismissed by the court earlier, with the observation that such issues fall outside the scope of judicial review and may be taken up with the appropriate authority.

The bench pointed out that, despite its earlier stance, the petitioner had refiled the plea only to gain publicity. Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also cautioned the petitioner against filing such frivolous petitions in the future and warned of imposing costs.

MISCELLANY

◆COMICS◆

Blondie


WHY THE LONG FACE?
WHENEVER THE BIG HOLIDAY EATING SEASON IS OVER, I KINDA FEEL BLUE
LISTEN UP! YOU NEED TO GET REAL! SEIZE THE DAY! OWN YOUR LIFE BY EATING IT FORWARD...ONE FAT PATTY AT A TIME!
THERE'S A REASON I ALWAYS WATCH DR. PHIL RERUNS BEFORE THE LUNCH RUSH

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

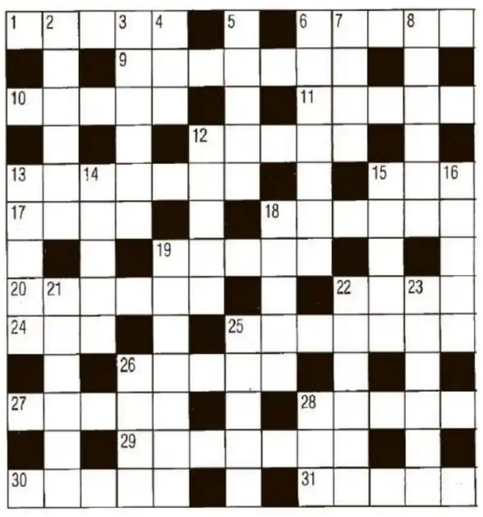
Peanuts

THAT'S HOW MANY PIZZAS WE'VE EATEN BEFORE MIDNIGHT
NOW, WE'LL ADD THAT TO HOW MANY PIZZAS WE'VE EATEN AFTER MIDNIGHT, AND...
POOF!
THAT BLEW MY POCKET CALCULATOR!

Marvin

JEFF AND I WANT A NICE, QUIET EVENING ALONE. WOULD YOU GUYS WATCH MARVIN FOR US TOMORROW?
WHAT DO WE GET OUT OF THIS?
QUALITY TIME WITH MARVIN!
MAYBE I DIDN'T PHRASE MY QUESTION CORRECTLY. WHAT DO WE GET OUT OF THIS?

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12399



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
1 Business vehicle? (5)
6 There's one in outer Hackney, darling (5)
9 Peaceful and calm for days (7)
10 The odd street light? (5)
11 Peels back to reveal the rest (5)
12 Tastefully eccentric? (5)
13 Game, by Jiminy! (7)
15 Short communication from the stateless (3)
17 A one-way girl (4)
18 Pass over a wild region (6)
19 Cross-country runner passing through Paris (5)
20 See a retrograde revel as smart (6)
22 Vigorous piece from Stravinsky (4)
24 Success on parade? (3)
25 Jack, the boy possibly with Samuel (7)
26 Run out and look around for central heating (5)
27 Beer to mature in different ways (5)
28 City water supplies? (5)
29 The boys like roulette (7)
30 He makes us cry (5)
31 For some, the nearest drug store (5)

DOWN
2 Ticket for the second match (6)
3 Happen to roll up with a bigwig? (6)
4 Oh, her ñ she sounds all right (3)
5 Do a recce, there's a good chap (5)
6 One held in a house with broken gates? (7)
7 Except for being unique (4)
8 There's no longer a tree, perhaps, in town (6)
12 Point to a vessel as being more modern (5)
13 The snag about a guy going to church (5)
14 Where an admission is made (5)
15 They're for picking up heavy weights around Gateshead (5)
16 Find there's money to be paid (5)
18 Going to get out of the rain, fortunately (2,3)
19 Just the emperor to break links with the States (7)
21 Set fire to some long speech (6)
22 Concentrating on one's aim (6)
23 Plenty one doles out for love? (6)
25 James, father of David? (5)
26 A current country (4)
28 Used to be squandered by Ted (3)

ACROSS
1 Procrastinate (5)
6 Vision (5)
9 Ignore, disregard (7)
10 Roughnecks (5)
11 Paper quantities (5)
12 Vapour from hot water (5)
13 Star sign (7)
15 Body of water (3)
17 Continent (4)
18 Agreement (6)
19 Cutting stroke (5)
20 Broad street (6)
22 Always (4)
24 Father (3)
25 Horse opera (7)
26 Herb type (5)
27 Aircraft detection system (5)
28 Card game (5)
29 Football official (7)
30 Piles (5)
31 Tyrants, autocrats (5)

DOWN
2 Moral principles (6)
3 Mohair (6)
4 Affirmative (3)
5 Planet (5)
6 Withdraw from a contest (7)
7 Article (4)
8 Hand tool (6)
12 Edge along (5)
13 Cold dish (5)
14 Lubricated (5)
15 Work out (5)
16 Decorate (5)
18 Pallid (5)
19 Stitches (7)
21 Leave empty (6)
22 Engraves (6)
23 Pencil rubber (6)
25 Broaden (5)
26 Food fish (4)
28 Not dry (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12398

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 3, Spas-m 8, Infer 10, Ta-Les 11, Alf 12, Break 13, Grouper 15, Re-p-el 18, Sal 19, Cereal 21, Gen-g-his 22, Word 23, Calm 24, Bale-ful 26, Shaven 29, Mar 31, Tin-ES 32, Bananas 34, Stars 35, Be-T 36, A-cut-E 37, B-L-end 38, Adieu.
DOWN: 1, Snark 2, Ref-used 4, Pu-rr 5, Stares 6, Maker 7, Medea 9, Flo 12, Belgian 14, Pan 16, Pedal 17, Llama 19, Cinemas 20, Twist 21, Groan 23, Cur-AB-le 24, Best-Ed 25, F-an 27, Hit-CH 28, V-esta 30, Pa-tna 32, Brie 33, Nee.

EASY
ACROSS: 3, Blast 8, Cabal 10, Oasis 11, Rut 12, Denim 13, Endures 15, Remit 18, Ran 19, Peseta 21, Matinee 22, Soil 23, Lido 24, Deficit 26, Acumen 29, Cat 31, Resin 32, Careful 34, Doyen 35, Rid 36, Rabat 37, Hates 38, Seats.
DOWN: 1, Barns 2, Natural 4, Lies 5, Soiree 6, Tames 7, Digit 9, Bud 12, Denizen 14, Rat 16, Merit 17, Talon 19, Pelican 20, Oscar 21, Minus 23, Literal 24, Denote 25, Car 27, Cedar 28, Midas 30, Nudes 32, Cent 33, Fit.

◆SU-DO-KU-6885◆

			8		3		5	
	2		9				1	
6						4		7
	6	1	5				7	4
		9				6		
5	8				6	1	2	
9		2						8
	3				5		9	
	7		2		8			

hard

SOLUTION TO 6884

6	9	2	1	5	7	4	8	3
1	4	5	9	8	3	2	6	7
8	7	3	4	6	2	5	9	1
3	2	1	8	9	5	6	7	4
9	6	7	3	4	1	8	2	5
4	5	8	2	7	6	1	3	9
5	1	6	7	3	8	9	4	2
7	8	9	5	2	4	3	1	6
2	3	4	6	1	9	7	5	8

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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S1	O1	I1	U1	U1	F4	N1	Triple Word Score
S1	C3	Y4	H4	E1	E1	S1	
I1	I1	U1	E1	M3	E1	L1	
E1	B3	A1	L1	S1	M3	A1	4th Letter Double

RACK 1 | RACK 2 | RACK 3 | RACK 4

PAR SCORE 70-80
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

A1	C3	H4	E1	D2	RACK 1	= 15
G2	A1	I1	N1	S1	T1	RACK 2	= 7
P3	A1	E1	L1	L1	A1	RACK 3	= 24
G2	L1	A1	S1	S1	Y4	RACK 4	= 10

PAR SCORE 35-45 — JUDD'S TOTAL = 56

HITORI-3339

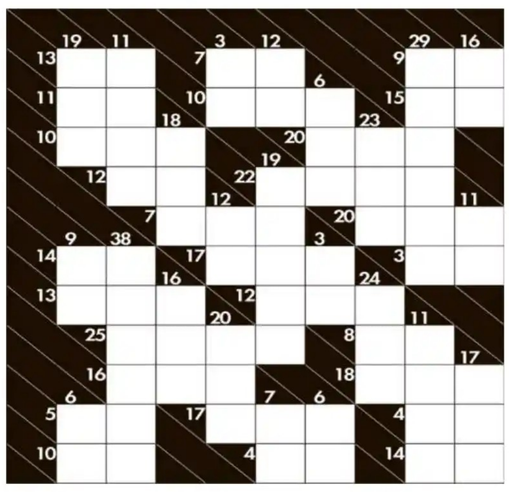
8	8	2	2	5	2	6	5
8	5	7	5	1	6	2	3
5	2	2	3	6	8	7	1
8	1	7	5	2	5	4	2
6	3	4	1	2	5	6	2
4	2	5	4	8	1	5	7
3	4	1	8	2	2	7	6
2	2	5	5	7	3	1	7

SOLUTION TO 3338

7	■	5	2	■	3	1	6
6	3	■	4	8	■	5	■
8	■	4	3	■	1	6	2
3	8	2	5	1	■	7	4
1	■	7	■	3	2	■	8
■	6	3	1	2	5	8	7
2	1	■	7	5	4	■	3
■	4	1	6	■	7	3	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

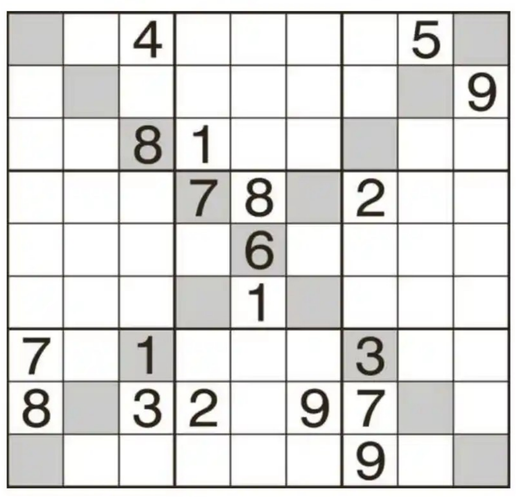
KAKURO- 3339



SOLUTION TO 3338

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3892



SOLUTION TO 3891

9	8	4	1	5	3	6	7	2
2	5	1	7	9	6	3	8	4
6	7	3	8	2	4	1	5	9
8	9	6	4	1	5	7	2	3
5	3	2	9	7	8	4	6	1
1	4	7	3	6	2	5	9	8
7	2	9	6	3	1	8	4	5
3	6	8	5	4	9	2	1	7
4	1	5	2	8	7	9	3	6

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

JUMBLE

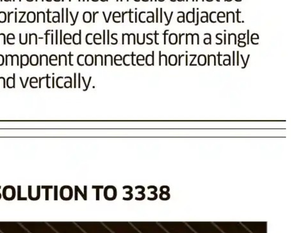
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RAQTU

TNNHI

CRENWH

LUENFG


THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek
Thank you! You're a life saver!
Hey, mister, don't drink it all.
Wow! You're thirsty!
THE OVERHEATED JOGGER WAS VERY HAPPY TO COME ACROSS SOME ---
Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

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Yeterday's Jumbles: AFOOT SPOIL TATTOO BASKET
Answer: Even though he didn't think he'd be a good spear fisherman, he — TOOK A STAB AT IT

Understanding the struggle behind defiance in classrooms

ALVINA CLARA

Not all students obey rules outright, and managing them in the classroom can be challenging at times. When you spot patterns — saying no adamantly, refusal, baiting, throwing temper tantrums — you may wrongly judge these students as mischief mongers in the classroom.

However, beneath their outward stubbornness, bad mood, or behaviour lies an underlying personality diagnosis or disorder that we seek to explore. Deep within, they are only seeking to be seen or understood differently, and when understood in the right light, they are likely to cooperate and respond positively.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a frequent and ongoing pattern of anger, irritability, arguing and defiance toward parents, teachers and other authority figures. Typically diagnosed in childhood, it is characterised by a persistent pattern of argumentative/defiant behaviour and vindictiveness towards authority figures lasting at least six months. It affects how students interact with authority figures, like parents and teachers at school. The signs in students may include:

- Often arguing with adults or people in authority
- Defying rules or refusing to follow adults' instructions
- Frequent temper tantrums and anger that lead to heated arguments or outbursts
- Angry and irritable mood when provoked or asked to do something
- Deliberately annoying people
- Often blaming others for their own mistakes or misbehaviour
- Saying mean and hateful things when upset
- Vindictive in nature. Trying to hurt the feelings of others and seeking revenge
- Consistent avoidance of challenging tasks or assignments

For some children, symptoms may first be seen only at home and during the school years. But with time, the behavioural issue may also extend to other settings, such as social gatherings and events. Sometimes ODD may develop later, but mostly before the early teen years, leading to impulse control problems, substance abuse, or anti-social behaviour. Oppositional defiant behaviours are frequent and ongoing, causing problems for both the child, parents and teachers.

Let us understand what ODD looks like in school, why it surfaces, and how teachers can intervene with thoughtful strategies that respect the child's upbringing and dignity while realigning their focus on learning, progress and achievement.

Causes of ODD

The causes for OPP include a combination of genetic and environmental factors:

- **Genetics** - A child's natural personality or character — also called temperament — may contribute to the development of ODD. Differences in the way nerves and the brain function may play a role.
- **Parental abuse or neglect:** A child who experiences abuse or neglect, harsh or inconsistent discipline, or a lack of proper supervision/guidance in childhood develops opposition to authority figures.
- **Family issues:** Unstable or unpredictable family relationships or a parent with narcissistic personality disorder or substance use disorder further aggravate their defiance mode.
- Tough environment: An erratic home environment, such as neglect, constant punishment or abuse, may lead to the development of ODD.

It's important to distinguish ODD from typical short-term adolescent outbursts or temporary situational stress. A qualified psychologist can diagnose ODD in students with certain tests. While there's no sure way to prevent oppositional defiant disorder, teachers can play a crucial front-line role by applying informed, supportive strategies. Also, positive parenting, counselling, and early treatment can help improve behaviour and prevent it from worsening.

Managing such students at school

- **Being firm, showing you care:** Establish clear routines at school to follow. Give step-by-step instructions that reduce anxiety and opposition. Speak in a soft, assuring tone and neutral language to reduce power struggles or retaliation. For example, "I noticed you are choosing to wait. I know you can do it, and you can start when you're ready" reinforces cooperation without escalation.
- **Positive relationships through mentoring**: Show genuine concern and interest in the student's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. Ongoing mentoring sessions build trust and lower defensiveness. Ensure you speak in a warm, comforting tone with thoughtful eye contact—to signal safety and presence.
- **Problem-solving through collaboration:** Provide students with options to complete a task or choose a study method. This empowers the student and reduces internal resistance. Invite their input, brainstorm solutions to a problem, and collaboratively agree on a plan, with set follow-up dates to complete the assignment.
- **Teaching coping strategies:** Identify triggers for defiance (peer dynamics, fatigue, overstimulation) and adjust the environment or schedule to minimise them. Teach the student to cope with rules and instructions with a set of calming and think-before-acting techniques. Include tools like meditation, deep breathing, counting to ten, short breaks, or a quiet "calm corner". Conduct mentoring sessions or one-to-one talks on relationship-building, anger management, and impulse control to help them internalise their importance.
- **Expectations and reward systems:** Set clear, observable expectations. for good behaviour and achievement of milestones/goals. Always offer constructive, consistent feedback free of blame and criticism. Accommodate their unique learning needs and study patterns. Assign differentiated tasks to reduce frustration and keep students engaged. Break assignments into smaller steps, offer step-by-step instructions, and provide exemplars or rubrics to guide performance.
- **Create an inclusive environment:** Welcome their differences and help them adjust to group norms, guided by principles of mutual respect and support. Highlight the student's achievements, strengths and successes publicly to build confidence, motivate change and reduce defensiveness.

Maintain open, non-judgmental communication with parents or guardians about their progress and bottlenecks at school. Collaborate with school counsellors, psychologists, or special education staff to provide needed interventions and monitor progress. If concerns persist, collaborate with mental health professionals to obtain a formal assessment and tailor interventions to the student's needs.

Handling ODD students may seem challenging, but with early intervention and informed strategies, teachers can bridge the gap.

(The author is an academic based in Dubai)

Internships: Compulsory and voluntary

Vijay Prakash Srivastava writes about the why and how of choosing an internship, the problems and opportunities

Come April, May, and June, students in professional courses look forward to completing their mandatory internship assignments. An internship is a significant part of the curriculum for undergraduate courses in engineering, management, design, architecture, and related fields. In most cases, educational institutions take the initiative to secure internship opportunities for their students.

Usually, an institute's training and placement department carries out this task of identifying internship opportunities for the students. However, instances in which students are left to fend for themselves are also not uncommon. Students are required to submit a comprehensive report related to their internship for evaluation and marking. A good score on an internship may significantly improve the grade of the student intern.

Simply put, an internship is a stint of practical training undertaken by a student within a company or an organisation. An internship gives students the opportunity to gain real-world experience and develop valuable workplace skills. Students also have the opportunity to network with professionals and others, developing new connections. Through observation and interaction, interns learn things that may have significant implications for their career and career progression.

Making the most out of it

Although internships are beneficial in many ways, their three major contributions can be in the following areas:

- Learning about a job before committing to it: Secondary information about careers is abundant and accessible to everyone. Through an internship, a job, a role, or a career, one can see it up close and decide how well it matches one's aspirations and whether it is the right fit. For example, a management graduate keen to pursue a career in consultancy may experience the work environment at a consultancy firm through an internship, which can inform their career decision.
- Strengthening the resume: An internship can be highlighted on a resume, which may advance one's case for inclusion in a further selection process. Here, one has the opportunity to mention the contributions made during the internship, the lessons learned, and how the internship has better equipped her for a particular role. However, the candidate needs to be modest in her description of the foregoing.
- Possibility of being offered regular employment: Public sector companies and government departments may not offer regular employment to interns, even when performance has been exemplary, whereas this may well happen in private organisations. A few private firms, including global companies, use internships as one of the modes for sourcing potential employees, by closely observing an intern's behaviour and giving psychometric tests sometimes.

Incentivising internships

Not all students approach their internship in the same way. Some consider it a formality, and aim to complete the internship to submit a report with minimum effort. But some of them take the internship very seriously, are fully engaged, and try to maximise their learning from it.

Also, companies offering internships may differ in how they handle interns. In some, providing internships is considered a formality. In such cases, no significant effort is made to guide or mentor the intern. Even though interns are assigned to a senior employee, this employee is found to be reluctant and is hardly helpful to the intern. Sometimes the employee may be busy with her own work and can find it difficult to look after the interns.

Except in cases where the institute has full control over selecting internship opportunities for its students, students should proactively search for internships that align with their interests. Many companies are willing to consider such requests from students, though they may ask for the institute's recommendation. In a few cases, the application must be routed through the institute or include the institute's recommendation.

Colleges need to be just. Their intent shouldn't be to impose the internship they identified at random. Instead, an effort should be made to explore an internship that best suits an individual student's needs.

There are paid and unpaid internships. For paid internships, the stipend amount ranges from a few thousand to a lakh or so. Though an internship shouldn't be chosen solely on the basis of the stipend, students should avoid internship offers that provide little value and are structured to exploit unpaid or low-paid labour. Surprisingly, internship notifications with such a motive are on the rise. It is always better to be discreet.

Interning with public sector

As government jobs dwindle, more young people are shifting their focus to opportunities in the private sector. In fact, a significant section of job seekers in our country doesn't seek jobs in government. In such a scenario, it's not surprising to find students oblivious to internship opportunities with government and public sector organisations. While these opportunities can be considered for compulsory internships, willing students may also undertake such internships voluntarily.

Details of the above internships can be found on the organisations' websites. In most cases, internships offered year after year have been found to be well-structured, with a reasonable stipend for interns and a transparent selection process. PSUs/government departments operate in a number of areas, and one can check for an opportunity in their area of interest. Such an internship will also add value to your resume and your perspective.

Reserve Bank of India, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, National Highways Authority of India, Indian Space Research Organization, Shipping Corporation of India, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Securities and Exchange Board of India, National Institute of Nutrition, Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, NITI Ayog, International Financial Services Centres Authority, Centre for Development of Telematics, State Bank of India, Indian Institute of Spices Research, Indian Statistical Institute are amongst well known public organisations offering internships to young people.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has a portal for the Digital India Internship Scheme.

(The author has led the learning and development function in a top nationalised bank)

Resilience, an underrated softskill

MAULLIKA SHARMA

For most young professionals, the first job is more than a career milestone—it is a culture shock. One day, you are a final year student, juggling assessments and placement stresses. A little later, you are navigating daily meetings, client emails, reports for seniors, and performance reviews. Suddenly, words like ownership, visibility, impact and falling short carry real consequences.

A 22-year-old engineer at a Bengaluru IT firm who prefers to be anonymous said, "It hit me in my second week at work. My manager said my work was 'fine but not client-ready'. I smiled in the meeting and cried on the way home." If this sounds familiar, you are not alone.

The transition from campus to corporate life is one of the most stressful phases of a young professional's experience. And while technical skills matter, what truly determines who struggles, who merely survives and who thrives is a life skill that doesn't feature in most résumés: resilience.

Resilience is not about being tough. It is often mistaken for emotional toughness or "just dealing with it". It is the ability to recover, regroup, and respond wisely when things don't go as planned.

At work, resilience shows up in small, everyday moments: When your code breaks five minutes before deployment; when a client rejects weeks of effort; when your manager's feedback feels harsh and unjustified; or when you compare yourself to peers who seem to be racing ahead.

For many, the hardest part is not the workload, but the self-doubt – the thought that maybe they got hired by mistake. Resilient professionals don't avoid these feelings. They learn to work through them.

Understand and identify emotions

Most Indian students grow up in systems that reward correctness, speed, and marks. Emotional awareness rarely makes the syllabus. So, when one makes a mistake at work, the internal dialogue can be brutal: "I should have known this." "I can't afford to mess up." "Everyone else seems much smarter."

The result is panic, overthinking, or withdrawal. Resilience begins with a pause to recognise what you are feeling without judging yourself for it. Nervousness before a presentation, disappointment after feedback, fear of failure: these are not weaknesses. They are signs that you are human.

"When my senior pointed out errors in my report, I felt ashamed," admits Sneha, a first-year consultant. "But once I named the underlying feeling—fear of looking incompetent—it stopped controlling me."

Understanding your emotions gives you the choice of how to respond. And that choice gives you power.

Focus on things in your control

Many freshers feel overwhelmed because they worry about everything at once: office politics, appraisal cycles, market conditions, peer comparisons, and parental expectations. Resilient people mentally separate what they can control from what they cannot.

You cannot control company restructuring, constantly changing client demands or how fast others get promoted.

You can control how prepared you are, what questions you ask, how you respond to feedback and how you invest in learning. The only things you can control are your own thoughts and behaviours – how you interpret what is happening outside of you, and how much you allow it to affect you.

"When our project was suddenly pulled, I felt angry," says Arjun, a new analyst. "Then I realised I couldn't control the decision—but I could control how I used the free time. I enrolled in an internal certification."

That shift—from helplessness to agency—is what resilience is about.

Leverage your strengths

Resilience grows when you lean into your strengths. Your strengths may not always be obvious. They could be curiosity, persistence, empathy, optimism, problem-solving, or calm under pressure.

"I always thought my strength was technical skills," says Neha, a design graduate. "But during crunch time, my team valued that I stayed calm and encouraged others. That surprised me."

When challenges arise, try to leverage what you are naturally good at to handle the situation.

Strengths make effort feel purposeful—and setbacks less personal.

Become more mindful

Attention at work is constantly fractured—due to open-plan floors, constant pings, and overlapping deadlines. Mindfulness trains you to stay fully present on the task at hand and improves emotional regulation.

- Taking one deep breath before responding to a tense email
- Listening to what is being said instead of mentally rehearsing your reply
- Noticing when stress shows up as tension in your body.

"I used to react immediately when things went wrong," says Kunal, a fresher. "Now I pause—even if only for ten seconds. That pause saves me from saying things I regret."

Attitude of gratitude

Now psychology backs it up as the basis for our age-old practice of humility and gratitude. Gratitude helps the mind notice what is working alongside what isn't. It doesn't deny stress—it balances it out.

A simple habit you may find useful is to write down three things that went well each night before you sleep. It doesn't have to be big things – a colleague helped you; you understood a new concept; you handled a tough conversation better than before! It stops you from replaying your mistakes before bed and lets you shine a light on the positives.

Gratitude calms the nervous system, improves sleep, and strengthens relationships—all essential for resilience.

Build resilience

Resilience is built, not inherited, and it outlasts your first job. It is a muscle, strengthened through use. Each time you survive embarrassment, rejection, or failure, your capacity grows. The first mistake feels devastating. The fifth feels manageable. Bouncing back becomes the norm!

Degrees may open doors, but resilience keeps you standing when things take a nosedive unexpectedly. As you enter a competitive, changing, and demanding professional world, resilience is not optional. It is foundational.

And the good news? It can be learned, practised, and strengthened—every single day.

(The author is a counsellor)

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Wings4Her scholarship

The Rolls-Royce Wings4Her Kind Circle Scholarship 2025–26 offers Rs 25,000 to female students in 1st–3rd year engineering at AICTE-approved colleges in India. Applicants must have ≥60% in Class 10 & 12 and family income ≤ Rs 4 lakh. Selection is merit-cum-means based, with preference for disadvantaged groups. Last date to apply: April 30, 2026. Apply: https://t.ly/O3YMm

Content design internship

Open Door Education is hiring a content design and research (computational thinking) intern who can work from home. Students with knowledge of mathematics, research, and analytics, and who have analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking ability, can apply by May 16. The stipend is Rs 18,000-20,000 /month. Apply at: internshala.com/i/8244da.

SEO internship

Foyrs is hiring a search engine optimisation (SEO) intern in Bengaluru. Students with knowledge of digital marketing, Google Analytics, performance marketing, search engine marketing (SEM), SEO, and web design can apply by May 16. The stipend is Rs 20,000-30,000 /month. Apply at: internshala.com/i/7e7091.

Software development internship

Vexocore IT Services Private Limited is hiring a creative writing intern who can work from home. Students with Node.js knowledge can apply by May 15. The stipend is Rs 5,000-8,000 /month. Apply at: internshala.com/i/399c82.

Talent acquisition internship

VST Tillers Tractors Limited is hiring a talent acquisition intern in Bengaluru. Students with knowledge of recruitment and talent management skills can apply by May 14. The stipend is Rs 9,000-10,000 /month. Apply at: internshala.com/i/37740d.

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SCAN TO WATCH THE CAMPUS VIDEO

US tariff refund portal goes live amid rush of claims

Relief comes after SC blow to Trump's signature policy

NEW YORK, REUTERS

IMPORT BREATHER
- Over 330,000 importers paid about USD 166 billion on 53 million shipments
- About 56,497 importers already eligible for refunds totalling USD 127 billion (including interest)
- Consumers may eventually benefit if companies pass on refunds

The refund system set up to allow companies to recover illegally collected tariffs from the US government went live on Monday as thousands of companies rushed to file claims.

"So far, so good"–though the system is a little glitchy, said Jay Foreman, CEO of toymaker Basic Fun, which had a team in its "war room" at its headquarters in Boca Raton, Florida, ready to start filing when the system went live at 8 am Eastern time (6:30 pm IST).

Foreman said the system did not crash, as some had feared it might under the onslaught of attempted submissions, but would sometimes not allow uploads and force retries. The company has over 500 files it needs to upload to the system, although these can be submitted in batches.

"However, if you load too many or the system is too busy, it will kick them back," Foreman said in an email about how the process was working in the early moments.

"We've got over 50% of our invoices loaded so far. We are hoping in the next few hours to have them all loaded. I'm very happy we got this process started early."

Companies contacted by Reuters in recent days expressed concerns about the durability of the new system, created by US Customs and Border Protection in response to a court order requiring it to return up to $166 billion to importers. "I'm relieved that the portal seems to be functioning properly," said Cassie Abel, CEO of Idaho-based outerwear company Wild Rye. Abel had her customs broker make the submission, which she said cost her $250 for the first phase of the filing.

The US Supreme Court in February struck down the tariffs President Donald Trump pursued under a law meant for use in national emergencies, handing the Republican president a stinging defeat.

In court filings, customs officials said that as of April 9, some 56,497 importers had completed the necessary steps to receive electronic refunds, totalling $127 billion, or more than three-quarters of the total eligible to be refunded.

Activists burn a prop depicting US President Donald Trump outside the military headquarters at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines, on Monday. REUTERS

China warns against US-led military drills

Beijing says joint exercises risk undermining regional trust

BEIJING, REUTERS

TEST OF READINESS
- Exercises feature live-fire drills, scenarios near Taiwan and the South China Sea
- Japan, Canada, France and New Zealand are active participants for first time

China on Monday warned against military cooperation that could undermine trust and deepen divisions in the region, as the US and the Philippines begin their annual military exercises with expanded participation from Japan.

"What the Asia-Pacific region most needs is peace and tranquillity, and what it least needs is the introduction of external forces to create division and confrontation," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said at a regular press briefing in Beijing.

He added that military cooperation between countries should not undermine mutual understanding and trust, disrupt regional peace and stability, be directed against third parties, or harm their interests. "We would like to remind the relevant countries that persisting in tying themselves together on security will only lead to backfiring," he said.

The annual "Balikatan" — or "shoulder-to-shoulder" — exercises, running from April 20 to May 8, will for the first time include members of Japan's Self-Defense Forces participating in live-fire drills.

China's military said last Friday that it had deployed naval and air forces to monitor the Japanese destroyer JS Ikazuchi as it transited the Taiwan Strait.

Musk summoned over child abuse images, deepfakes

PARIS, AP/PTI: Elon Musk has been summoned to Paris on Monday, where investigators are examining allegations of misconduct linked to the social media platform X, including the spread of child sexual abuse material and deepfake content.

The world's richest man and Linda Yaccarino, the platform's former chief executive, have been called for "voluntary interviews", while other employees are scheduled to be questioned as witnesses throughout the week, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

It remains unclear whether Musk and Yaccarino will travel to Paris. A spokesperson for X did not respond to questions from The Associated Press, and Yaccarino's current company, eMed, did not reply to a request for comment.

French prosecutors also suspect that controversy surrounding the platform's artificial intelligence system, Grok, and its deepfake outputs may have been orchestrated to boost the value of Musk-owned companies ahead of a key market listing. Authorities have alerted US officials.

EU to expand Iran sanctions over Hormuz disruption

BRUSSELS/PARIS, REUTERS: The European Union will expand the criteria of its Iran sanctions to include those responsible for blocking the Strait of Hormuz, which has been largely shut for nearly two months, two EU diplomats said.

Tehran closed the strait after US-Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28, cutting off roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas supplies. More than a dozen tankers sailed through Hormuz after Iran briefly declared it open on Friday, but the ceasefire agreement was thrown into jeopardy after the US seized an Iranian cargo ship as it maintained its own blockade of Iranian ports.

FBI chief sues magazine for $250 million

WASHINGTON, AP/PTI: FBI Director Kash Patel on Monday sued The Atlantic for $250 million, alleging that an article describing his purported excessive drinking was false and a "malicious hit piece".

The Atlantic said it stood by its reporting and would vigorously defend against what it called a "meritless lawsuit". In the article published on the magazine's website on Friday, author Sarah Fitzpatrick wrote that Patel was concerned about losing his job and had "good reasons to think so — including some having to do with what witnesses described to me as bouts of excessive drinking".

The report said his behaviour, including "conspicuous inebriation and unexplained absences", had alarmed officials at the FBI and the Department of Justice.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

An Israeli soldier damages the head of a statue of Jesus, in Debel, Lebanon, in this still image obtained from social media released on Sunday. REUTERS

Israel, Lebanon to resume rare talks in Washington

▸ An Israeli official said historic diplomatic talks with Lebanon are set to resume in Washington on Thursday, AP/PTI reports from Tel Aviv.

The ambassadors of the two countries met in Washington last week for their first direct diplomatic engagement in decades. The same representatives are expected to participate in Thursday's talks, the official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations. There was no immediate confirmation from the US or Lebanon. The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah opposes the talks but is currently observing a 10-day ceasefire announced last week. Israel says the discussions are aimed at disarming Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, foreign minister and military on Monday condemned the desecration of a crucifix smashed by an Israeli soldier in a southern Lebanese village home to Christians. A photo that emerged online over the weekend shows a soldier taking the blunt side of an axe to a fallen sculpture of Jesus on the cross. It was posted by Younis Tirawi, who describes himself as a Palestinian reporter.

Sri Lanka repatriates 19 Indians

▸ Sri Lanka on Monday repatriated 19 Indian fishermen, days after the island nation's navy arrested 16 Indians for allegedly poaching in its territorial waters, PTI reports from Colombo.

The fishermen issue remains a contentious aspect of ties between India and Sri Lanka. "19 Indian fishermen are being repatriated from Sri Lanka today and will return home by evening," the High Commission of India in Sri Lanka said in a post on X. According to the Sri Lanka Navy, 128 Indian fishermen have been arrested for alleged poaching in Sri Lankan waters so far this year. On April 13, the navy seized an Indian fishing boat and apprehended four fishermen for alleged poaching in waters north of Mannar.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Biz Bytes

Hyundai, TVS ink pact for electric 3W

NEW DELHI, PTI: Hyundai Motor Company and TVS Motor Company on Monday said they have signed a joint development agreement to advance development and commercialisation of electric three-wheeler solutions designed specifically for India's last-mile mobility needs.

Under the pact, Hyundai will lead the design and co-develop the electric three-wheeler (E3W) by leveraging its R&D expertise, advanced mobility tech and human-centric design approach, the companies said in a statement.

TVS will co-develop the product using its leading-edge electric platform, extensive three-wheeler engineering expertise and deep local market knowledge, the statement said.

Swiggy moves to new B'luru headquarters

BENGALURU, DHNS: Swiggy has moved its corporate headquarters to Whitefield from Outer Ring Road, anchoring its next phase of growth. Spread across four floors, the campus brings together Swiggy's businesses, from food delivery and quick commerce to dining-out and logistics, under one roof. It includes collaborative zones, meeting rooms, amphitheatre-style learning spaces, recreation areas, and so on.

India and South Korea to upgrade trade agreement

Eye to double bilateral trade to $50 billion by 2030

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India and South Korea on Monday issued a joint declaration for resuming talks to upgrade their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which was signed in 2009, and outlined a roadmap to nearly double bilateral trade to $50 billion by 2030.

The two countries signed multiple MoUs and agreed on a joint strategic vision for a "special strategic partnership". India and South Korea also released a comprehensive framework for partnership in shipbuilding, shipping and maritime logistics.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung, who is on his maiden state visit to India, held delegation-level talks.

In his press statement after the talks, PM Modi said India and South Korea aim to increase bilateral trade from the current $27 billion to $50 billion by 2030. "To facilitate financial flows between the two countries, we have launched the India-Korea Financial Forum. To strengthen business cooperation, we have established an Industrial Cooperation Committee. To enhance collaboration in critical technologies and supply chains, we are initiating an Economic Security Dialogue," Modi said.

"To facilitate the entry of Korean companies, especially SMEs, into India, we will also establish a Korean Industrial Township. Furthermore, within the next year, we will upgrade the India-Korea trade agreement," he added.

Economic cooperation

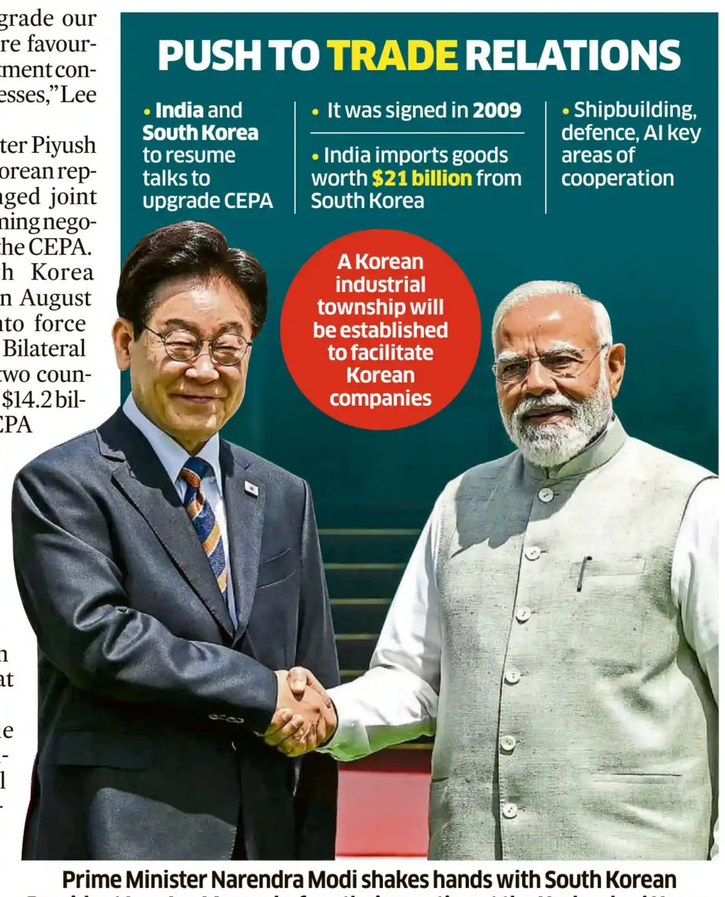
Lee said the two sides have agreed to significantly upgrade economic cooperation, focusing on sectors such as shipbuilding, defence, and AI. "Considering the current situations in the Middle East, we will sustain cooperation for supply stability of energy resources and key commodities," he said.

"We agreed to speed up negotiations to upgrade our CEPA to create more favourable trade and investment conditions for our businesses," Lee added.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and a South Korean representative exchanged joint declaration on resuming negotiations to upgrade the CEPA.

The India-South Korea CEPA was signed in August 2009 and came into force from January 2010. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased from $14.2 billion at the time of CEPA implementation, to $26.89 billion in 2024-25. Trade balance is heavily in favour of South Korea. Out of the nearly $27 billion bilateral trade, India's imports from South Korea stand at around $21 billion.

Speaking at the India-Korea Business Forum, Goyal said the two countries have agreed to work on a fast-track, mission-mode approach to upgrade the CEPA deal.


PUSH TO TRADE RELATIONS
• India and South Korea to resume talks to upgrade CEPA
• It was signed in 2009
• India imports goods worth $21 billion from South Korea
• Shipbuilding, defence, AI key areas of cooperation
A Korean industrial township will be established to facilitate Korean companies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shakes hands with South Korean President Lee Jae Myung before their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Monday. AFP

Fertilisers, crude, coal, electricity output dip in March

Core sector's worst performance in 19 months

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Output of India's core infrastructure sector fell by 0.4% year-on-year in March, the worst performance in 19 months, dragged by a sharp decline in fertilisers, crude oil, coal and electricity production amid the West Asia conflict, as per official data released on Monday.

Fertiliser production in March was 24.6% lower, when compared with the same month last year. This dragged the overall production for the full year 2025-26 into negative over the previous year.

Crude oil production in March was 5.7% down year-on-year, while coal output dipped by 4%, as per data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The core sector growth as measured by the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) had posted a growth of 2.8% in February. The eight core sectors, which include coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity, account for 40.27% weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

According to ICRA, the weak core sector may drag IIP growth in March to 1.0-2.0% from 5.2% recorded in February.

The average core sector growth in 2025-26 stood at 2.6%, which is the lowest in five years. Barring cement (8.6%), electricity (0.9%) and steel (9.1%), all other sectors contracted in FY26.

Disruption in gas supply due to the West Asia conflict badly hit fertiliser production in March.

"Fertiliser output in March 2026 declined by 24.6%, the fastest dip in 2011-12 base data. The gas supply to fertiliser industry was reduced to 70-75% in March 2026 due to the Iran war, which is now increased to around 95%. This is likely to have an adverse impact on fertiliser production even in April 2026," said Devendra Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings and Research.

The disruption in global supply prompted the boost in local production of natural gas in the country. Natural gas production in March was 6.4% higher, when compared with the same month last year.

SHARP DECLINE
- Fertiliser production in March **24.6%** lower, compared with same month last year
- Crude oil production in March **5.7%** down YoY
- Coal output dips by **4%** during month
- ICRA says the weak core sector may drag IIP growth in March to **1.0-2.0%**, from **5.2%** in February

"The growth in steel and cement output also weakened in March 2026 relative to February 2026, suggesting that construction activity slowed in the month," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA.

Rupee dips 25 paise against dollar

MUMBAI, PTI: The rupee pared its initial gains and settled with a loss of 25 paise at 93.16 against the US dollar on Monday, after fresh tensions in West Asia led to an increased demand for the American currency and kept crude prices steady.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 92.73 and touched an intra-day high of 92.70 against the greenback. It also hit the day's low of 93.24 during the session before settling at 93.16 against the dollar, registering a loss of 25 paise from the previous closing level.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.14% to 98.03.

Leaders plan to invest average of $186 mn in AI

BENGALURU, DHNS: Over the next 12 months, the global average planned AI investment will be $186 million, as leaders look to maintain AI as a top priority even during recession. KPMG International's Global AI Pulse Q1 2026 study highlights that 64% report meaningful AI business value, but many struggle with value measurement, governance agility, data privacy, cybersecurity and workforce resistance.

Only 11% are pulling ahead by scaling AI agents across functions and coordinating them across workflows, and 82% of AI leaders report clear business value from AI, compared to 62% non-leaders.

New phase

The report mentions that AI is entering a new phase where scaling is expected, and capability is advancing faster than enterprise readiness. AI is becoming embedded in how work is executed, decisions are made, and systems are coordinated. As this shift accelerates, organisations are moving beyond deployment toward redesigning how the enterprise operates.

Though expectations for AI capability are rising rapidly, many organisations have not yet built the operating models, governance and workforce capability required to support AI.

"We're all looking to try and get better, that's what the game's about, be the best team there is, and we're looking forward to plenty more notes and messages from each other to get better as a group.

COOPER CONNOLLY, PBKS

IPL BRIEF

PSL ban for Shanaka

▸ The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has imposed a one-year PSL ban on Sri Lanka's captain Dasun Shanaka, reports PTI from Karachi.

Shanaka, after initially being named in the Pakistan Super League, joined the IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals side in the Indian Premier League.

The PCB has also banned Blessing Muzarabani for two years for the same reason but his agent Rob Humphries claims his player never signed any contract with a PSL franchise so his ban is unjustified and should be reviewed.

Inglis boost for Super Giants

▸ Struggling Lucknow Super Giants are set to receive a significant mid-season boost with swashbuckling Australia batter Josh Inglis likely to join the squad ahead of their IPL clash against Mumbai Indians on May 4, reports PTI from New Delhi.

The 31-year-old had decided to skip the first half of the season due to his wedding. Having tied the knot on April 18, Inglis is expected to fly to India after a brief hiatus from action.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, Inglis, who was secured for Rs 8.6 crore despite his unavailability for the first part of the season, is likely to be available for the last six matches of LSG, starting with the May 4 clash against MI.

Mumbai back to winning ways

Tilak's ton, Ashwani's four-for help Hardik's men drub Titans by 99 runs

AHMEDABAD, PTI

Tilak Varma played a knock for the ages as his maiden IPL century turned the corner for Mumbai Indians with the five-time champions crushing Gujarat Titans by 99 runs here on Monday.

Spurred by skipper Hardik Pandya's 'hard talk' asking him to get a move-on during the strategic break after he scratched his way to 19 off 22 balls, Tilak changed gears in a flash to amass 82 off the next 23 deliveries and end on an unbeaten 101 off 45 balls.

Mumbai Indians' 199 for 5 was good enough as Jasprit Bumrah broke his wicket-less streak for five matches with a first-ball dismissal of Sai Sudharsan and GT never recovered from there to get all out for 100 in 15.5 overs. The introduction of left-arm seamer Ashwani Kumar proved to be decisive as he snared 4 for 24 to run through the middle-order along with Mitchell Santner (2/16 in 3 overs).

Tilak Varma scored an unbeaten 45-ball 101 to help Mumbai Indians beat Gujarat Titans by 99 runs at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Monday. AFP

SCORE BOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS: Quinton de Kock c & b Rabada 13, Danish Malewar lbw b Rabada 2, Naman Dhir c Rabada b Prasidh 45, Suryakumar Yadav b Rabada 15, Tilak Varma (not out) 101, Hardik Pandya c Phillips b Siraj 15, Sherfane Rutherford (not out) 1. Extras (W-2, LB-4, B-1) 7. **TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 20 overs) 199.**
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-25, 3-44, 4-96, 5-177.
Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 4-0-25-1, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-33-3, Ashok Sharma 3-0-38-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-31-0, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-54-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-13-0
GUJARAT TITANS: Sai Sudharsan c Krish b Bumrah 0, Shubman Gill c Dhir b Ashwani 14, Jos Buttler lbw b Pandya 5, Washington Sundar c Dhir b Santner 26, Glenn Phillips c & b Santner 6, Rahul Tewatia c de Kock b Ashwani 8, M Shahrukh Khan c Dhir b Ashwani 17, Rashid Khan c Bawa b Ashwani 4, Kagiso Rabada st de Kock b Ghazanfar 12, Ashok Sharma (not out) 1, Mohammed Siraj lbw b Ghazanfar 0. Extras (W-7). **TOTAL (all out, 15.5 overs) 100.**
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-5, 3-40, 4-54, 5-55, 6-79, 7-85, 8-86, 9-99.
Bowling: Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 3-0-15-1, Hardik Pandya 1-0-18-1, Krish Bhagat 2-0-10-0, Ashwani Kumar 4-0-24-4, AM Ghazanfar 2.5-0-17-2, Mitchell Santner 3-0-16-2.
Result: MI won by 99 runs.
PoM: Tilak Varma

The defeat also exposed the chinks in GT armoury, especially their fragile middle-order where they have carried two 'non performing assets' in Rahul Tewatia and M Shahrukh Khan for the longest time.

Between them, they played 24 balls and scored only 25 runs and it is baffling to see head coach Ashish Nehra placing so much faith in the mediocre duo.

The win, after four straight defeats, took Mumbai Indians to seventh place in the points table, but more importantly, it improved their net run rate significantly (+0.067).

MI looked a different outfit till the 14th over when the second strategic time out was taken. Post that, Tilak did the unthinkable to give the total respectability, which looked improbable after the powerplay thanks to an intimidating first spell by Kagiso Rabada.

At the strategic time-out post 14th over, TV cameras caught skipper Pandya animatedly telling something to Tilak, who had looked unconvincing till that point of time and was occasionally booed by the Motera crowd.

But after that break, one saw the Tilak that one has always known as he threw the kitchen sink at GT's fastest bowlers. Prasidh Krishna went for 19, and new pace sensation Ashok Sharma was toyed with for 26 runs.

Before Monday's innings, Tilak's poor form was one of the talking points as he managed only 43 in the previous five outings. In all, he hit eight fours and seven sixes on the day, with a few over covers and some hit down the ground.

Pandya (15) did push Tilak but hardly did anything of note himself in their 81-run stand off only 38 balls. The last six overs yielded 96 runs, largely due to the ever inconsistent Prasidh Krishna (1/54 in 4 overs).

Sunrisers meet inconsistent DC

Kishan's men host Capitals in fiesty mid-table contest

HYDERABAD, PTI

Ishan Kishan

LIVE 7:30 PM

Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to make home advantage count when they take on inconsistent Delhi Capitals in a mid-table clash of the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.

Both teams sit on six points, though fourth-placed Sunrisers Hyderabad are marginally ahead, having played a game more and boasting a superior Net Run Rate.

For SRH, the narrative has been one of gradual correction. In the absence of skipper Pat Cummins, who has linked up with the squad but remains unavailable for this game, their bowling unit initially looked thin.

But over the last two games, a relatively unheralded group has stepped up. Names like Praful Hinge, Sakib Husain and Shivang Kumar have seized their opportunity, injecting both energy and control into the attack.

Hinge's standout performance against Rajasthan Royals was followed by a collective bowling effort, led by Eshan Malinga, against Chennai Super Kings, where SRH delivered a clinical exhibition of death bowling, helping them secure back-to-back wins at home. That resurgence with the ball has been central to their recent momentum.

SRH's approach remains aggressively high-risk, but the returns have been highly inconsistent as they have not clicked together.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NR	Pts	NRR
Punjab Kings	6	5	0	1	11	1.420
Royal Challengers	6	4	2	0	8	1.171
Rajasthan Royals	6	4	2	0	8	0.599
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	3	3	0	6	0.566
Delhi Capitals	5	3	2	0	6	0.310
Gujarat Titans	6	3	3	0	6	-0.821
Mumbai Indians	6	2	4	0	4	0.067
Chennai Super Kings	6	2	4	0	4	-0.780
Lucknow Super Giants	6	2	4	0	4	-1.173
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	1	5	1	3	-0.879

Neutral curators queer the pitch as teams rue loss of home advantage

SIDNEY KIRAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

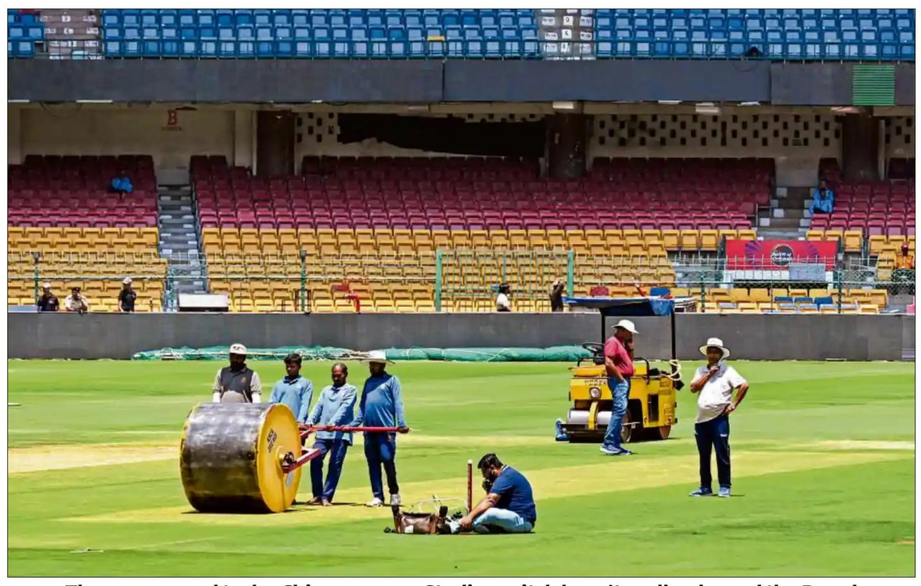
Say Chinnaswamy Stadium and what comes to your mind is the high-scoring surfaces and vociferous fans. While the fans have maintained their decibel levels, the Royal Challengers Bengaluru batters haven't necessarily found the surface to their liking with its spongy and uncharacteristically tacky nature making life hard for them in the last couple of matches.

The opening two games were the typical run-fest with four innings surpassing 200 and RCB reaching 250/3 against Chennai Super Kings but the last two matches have seen batters, especially at the start innings, struggle to time the ball. They are unable to play the big shots from the get-go with batters being forced to bide their time before opening their shoulders.

In the third match here, LSG huffed and puffed to 146 all out and Royal Challengers galloped to victory in 15.1 overs only because of cameos from Rajat Patidar (27, 13b) and Jitesh Sharma (23, 9) after opener Phil Salt and one-drop Devdutt Padikkal looked ill at ease during their respective stays. Opener Virat Kohli scored a patient 34-ball 49.

It was a similar scenario in the RCB vs Delhi Capitals match on Saturday that ebbed and flowed like a slow-burner before exploding to life in the final over when the visitors' David Miller won the game with two sixes and a four.

Although Royal Challengers haven't openly expressed their unhappiness over how the wicket has been playing, their displeasure could be sensed. The defending champions rely on their batting – a wonderful cocktail of experience, youth and big-hitters – to do all the heavy lifting, and they are forced to recalibrate their approach in their own den.



The spongy and tacky Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch hasn't really pleased the Royal Challengers Bengaluru batters. DH PHOTO/ PUSHKAR V

"I think it (pitch) has been quite varied," said Mo Bobat, RCB's Director of Cricket, after the loss against DC. "Even this season, we've probably had, I think that game against CSK when we got a big score, it was certainly quite spongy and a little bit tacky. But a couple of games on the pitch have been quite low and slow. So we certainly found the first innings today, it was very slow, it wasn't coming on to the bat at all."

It's not just RCB who seem to have a gripe with their home advantage being neutralised following BCCI's decision to appoint neutral curators for all IPL venues since the 2019 season. Five-time champions Chennai Super Kings, who maximised their skills on the spin-friendly Chepauk track, three-time winners Kolkata Knight Riders, whose mystery spinners revelled on the slow Eden Gardens, new entrants Lucknow Super Giants and two-time champions Sunrisers Hyderabad have voiced their frustration over the nature of the pitches and their complete lack of say in getting the desired surface.

The experiment of appointing neutral curators started off with Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai before being implemented across all venues. While the objective behind it is to ensure fairness, it has practically eliminated the 'home advantage' that franchises enjoyed prior to this move - something which many have openly complained about. Currently every venue has a BCCI-appointed curator who is assisted by a local man.

Pitch preparation is one of the most arduous tasks in cricket where a lot of factors such as rain, temperature, soil etc, come into picture. Although the inputs from a local person helps, eventually the BCCI-appointed man takes the call.

A former BCCI curator, speaking to *DH* on conditions of anonymity, felt that for neutral curators to get a grasp of the pitch, they have to spend a considerable amount of time understanding it.

"For any curator working in a particular venue, it's important to understand the evaporation and transpiration (grass pulling water) levels there that can leave the pitch dry underneath. You need to know how much water evaporates and how much to rewater so it gets into the profile of the pitch, not just the surface. Surface moisture makes the pitch tacky and causes uneven bounce. So, it's crucial to keep the pitch moist to the optimum level when the temperature is on the higher side," said the curator.

So shouldn't teams be allowed to enjoy home advantage considering that's the norm in most leagues across sports in the world. Teams are formed in order to make the most of home conditions, but if the neutral curators queer the pitch, it takes sports' one of the most crucial variants out of equation.

Manpreet in probables camp

NEW DELHI, PTI

The coaching camp, which is scheduled to be held at the Sports Authority of India in Bengaluru, will focus on tactics, conditioning and match-simulation sessions. PTI FILE PHOTO

Hockey India on Monday named a 36-member core probable group for the upcoming senior men's national coaching camp, scheduled to be held at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru from April 20 to May 9.

The probable group also included the return of former captain Manpreet Singh, goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak and forward Dilpreet Singh after missing the FIH Pro League two months ago over severe disciplinary action.

The coaching camp will focus on tactical cohesion, conditioning, and match-simulation sessions as the team aims to fine-tune its preparations in the lead-up to a busy international season, which includes European leg of the FIH Pro League 2025-56, World Cup, and Asian Games.

Also, the squad will look to build rhythm, refine combinations, and strengthen depth across all departments.

The goalkeeping unit features experienced names including Krishan, Suraj Karkera and Pawan, alongside emerging talents such as Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar and Princedeep Singh.

In defence, the team will be anchored by stalwarts like Harmanpreet Singh and Amit Rohidas, supported by Jarmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, Sumit, and a promising pool comprising Poovanna Chandura Boby, Yashdeep Siwach, Nilam Sanjeep Xess, and Amandeep Lakra.

The midfield sees a strong blend of experience and youth, with Manpreet, Hardik Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad leading the charge. They will be joined by Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, Vishnu Kant Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, and Rosan Kujur.

Probable group: Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Pawan, Suraj Karkera, Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar, Princedeep Singh.
Defenders: Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Harmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sumit, Poovanna Chandura Boby, Yashdeep Siwach, Nilam Sanjeep Xess, Amandeep Lakra.
Midfielders: Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Hardik Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Vishnu Kant Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Rosan Kujur, Manpreet Singh.
Forwards: Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Mandeep Singh, Araijeet Singh Hundal, Angad Bir Singh, Uttam Singh, Selvam Karthi, Aditya Arjun Lalage, Maninder Singh, Dilpreet Singh.

SA women take 2-0 lead

DURBAN, PTI: Laura Wolvaardt made a free-flowing 54 and Sune Luus complemented her skipper with a well-composed 57 as South Africa crushed India by eight wickets in the second women's T20I here on Sunday.

The match's script was written in clear letters once SA bowlers bundled out India for a below-par 147, and it was taken into its logical culmination by Wolvaardt and Luus who added 106 runs for the opening alliance in just 12 overs.

The hosts made 148 for two in 17.1 overs. SA now lead the five-match series 2-0.

Wolvaardt was quite impressive, making runs more through finding gaps rather than going for big hits.

However, the SA skipper freed her hands whenever the opportunity presented, like an inside out six over covers off left-arm spinner Sree Charani.

Wolvaardt soon reached her fifty, 15th in a stellar T20I career so far, off just 30 balls.
Brief scores: India: 147 all out in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 57; Chloe Tryon 3-22) lt to South Africa: 148/2 in 17.1 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 54, Sune Luus 57; Shreyanka Patil 2-35) by eight wickets. **PoM**: Chloe Tryon: 3/22; **Next match:** Apr 22 (Johannesburg).

AIU designates India in 'extremely high' category of doping risks

NEW DELHI, PTI

India was on Monday designated as a country with an "extremely high" risk of doping by World Athletics after topping the list of doping offenders for the past two years, a development which will put the athletes under more stringent anti-doping stipulations.

In a decision taken recently by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) Board, Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has been re-categorised from Category B to Category A under Rule 15 of the World Athletics' Anti-Doping Rules.

"The doping situation in India has been high-risk for a long time and, unfortunately, the quality of the domestic anti-doping programme is simply not proportionate to the doping risk," AIU Chair David Howman said in a release.

"While the AFI has advocated for anti-doping reforms within India, not enough has changed. The AIU will now work with the AFI to achieve reforms to safeguard the integrity of the sport of athletics, as we have done with other 'Category A' Member Federations."

India has ranked in the top two for the most Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) in athletics between 2022 and 2025.

According to the AIU, India recorded 48 ADRVs (ranked 2nd) in 2022, 63 (ranked 2nd) in 2023, 71 (ranked 1st) in 2024 and 30 ADRVs (ranked 1st) in 2025 (data received so far).

Under the World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules, the AIU Board categorises all Member Federations according to their doping risk to the sport. Category 'A' Member Federations, representing the highest risk, are subject to more stringent requirements, including minimum testing of their national team athletes.

Category 'B' Member Federations represent a medium doping risk while Category 'C' Member Federations represent a low doping risk.

Recently, India have surpassed Kenya to top the Athletics Integrity Unit's (AIU) list of ineligible persons due to doping violations with 148 suspended athletes.

Under Rule 15.3.3, every three years the AIU Board shall determine in its absolute discretion the category of each Member Federation by taking into account the following factors such as the doping history of athletes, athlete support personnel etc, confidential intelligence or other information known to the Integrity Unit, the extent of success, or the potential for success, of the Member Federation in international events, the effectiveness of the national anti-doping programme in the country to deter, detect and pursue doping at all levels.

The AIU may change a Member Federation's assigned category at any time within the three years.

A Category 'A' Member Federation shall ensure that there is an effective, intelligent and proportionate annual testing programme maintained and implemented.

Pranavi finishes T36 at Joburg Open

JOHANNESBURG, PTI: Indian golfer Pranavi Urs closed the week with a round of 1-under 72 and finished tied 36th at the Joburg Ladies Open here.

The sole Indian to make the cut this week had a roller-coaster of a round with one stretch of four holes from the second to the fifth having par-birdie-eagle-bogey.

Overall she had two birdies, an eagle and three bogeys in her 72 at the par-73 Randpark Golf course.

The other four Indians, Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik, Avani Prashanth and Hitaashee Bakshi, missed the cut.

Aditi T-51
Indian golfer Aditi Ashok couldn't recover from an early triple bogey on the par-4 fifth hole, carding a four-over 76 to finish tied for 51st at the JM Eagle LA Championship in Los Angeles.

Aditi had just one birdie, two birdies and a triple in her 76 that followed rounds of 70-72-69-76 for a total of 1-under for the week.

IN BRIEF

Bombers blast six past Coorg

▸ Shreyas (8th, 16th) and Naeemuddin (18th, 30th) struck a brace each as Bombers blanked Coorg 6-0 in a KSHA A Division Hockey League Championship match in Bengaluru on Monday.

Results: Bombers HC: 6 (Siddanth 3rd, Chengappa 6th, Shreyas 8th, 16th, Naeemuddin 18th, 30th) bt Coorg: 0. Guru HC: 4 (Karthik 9th, 18th, Sandeep 15th, 45th) bt Rangers HC: 2 (Arvind Raj 2nd, 34th).

Saran shocks top seed

▸ Karnataka's teenager Prakash Saran shocked the top seed Ojas Tejo 6-4, 2-6, 7-6(5) in the opening round of the men's singles of the TNR Memorial AITA tennis tournament.

Results: Men: Prakash Saran bt Ojes Tejo 6-4, 2-6, 7-6(5).

Reds United post 2-0 win

▸ Charvi A's strike and an own goal from Yukthi P Guptha handed Reds United FC an easy 2-0 win over Technico FF in the KSFA A Division Women's League Championship at the BFS on Monday, reports DHNS.

Result: Reds United FC: 2 (Charvi A 16th, Yukthi P Guptha 68th own goal) bt Technico FF: 0.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

IPL: SRH vs DC **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar**.

FOOTBALL

La Liga: Mallorca vs Valencia **(10:30 pm)**, Real Madrid vs Alaves **(1:00 am, Wednesday)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode**.

ISL: Chennaiyin FC vs Mohammedan SC **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Ten 2, FanCode.**

FOOTBALL

Manipur's binding force in tatters

Ethnic violence is driving the talent away from the NE state

Imphal-based NEROCA FC are facing dearth in talent with footballers looking for greener pastures outside the state . AIFF

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Think of Manipur today and the first impression is no longer football but the prolonged ethnic violence that has gripped the North-Eastern state since 2023.

Recent attempts to restore peace in the Imphal valley offered brief hope but fresh clashes earlier this month exposed how deep the divide still runs between the Meiteis (the majority community living in the plains) and the Kuki-Zo tribes, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking minority settled in the hills.

"Any respect between Meiteis and Kukis is not possible at the moment. If you hear that militants killed a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old baby girl in a bomb blast, how do you expect any peace?" a young footballer from NEROCA FC tells *DH*.

Imphal-based NEROCA (North Eastern Re-Organising Cultural Association) holds a special place in the state's football culture, sharing a six-decade-old cross-town rivalry with TRAU FC while protraying the image of the thriving ecosytem for the game.

In many ways, Manipur has long been inseparable from Indian football. The state is considered the factory of Indian football talent with players spread across clubs nationwide. It's important to understand that football isn't merely a sport - it is a way of life and flourishes even with the limited infrastructure of a couple of full-sized grass pitches.

That passion was too evident in 2017 when NEROCA made their long-awaited I-League debut. Over 27,000 fans flocked the Khuman Lampak Stadium in the capital as the club, coached by Gift Raikhan, went on a remarkable run, narrowly missing the title that season while finishing ahead of Kolkata giants Mohun Bagan and East Bengal.

"Unfortunately, it's not the same anymore," says Raikhan, who returned this year to rebuild the club. "We are trying to get back on our feet, but the challenges have increased tenfold."

The outbreak of violence in 2023 forced both NEROCA and TRAU to shift their home matches out of Manipur. This hit them really hard as both sides faced relegations, owing to the lack of players' availability and other logistical concerns due to the concerns.

More damaging than the results was the complete halt of footballing activity in the state. Local leagues stopped, development pathways collapsed, and players — especially emerging ones — were left without competition or visibility.

"Football has suffered big time in the Imphal valley," says NEROCA general manager Nixon Rajkumar. "Since 2023, local leagues at all levels have stopped. Even when senior football resumed last year, strikes, blockades and curfews kept interrupting it. We could only assemble our squad 10-15 days before the league started."

The uncertainty persists as NEROCA remains uncertain about their home matches following the latest violence.

At the grassroots level, the impact is worse as young footballers are either stepping away from the sport or leaving the state altogether. Those with means are moving to cities like Bengaluru, Delhi and Kolkata, chasing opportunities that no longer exist back home. Their growing presence in local leagues, especially in Karnataka, has not gone unnoticed.

"Over the last five years, we've seen many players from the NorthEast, including Manipuri footballers (in Karnataka leagues)," a Karnataka State Football Association official says. "But the numbers have increased rapidly in recent years."

Raikhan understands the exodus but also what it costs the state's footballing future. For him, the solution still circles back to something bigger than the sport.

"Peace will return to Manipur soon, we have to believe it, or the bloodshed will never end," he says. "Football has a big role to play because for years it kept us united before, and it will do so again."

Premkumar SK

Phijam hat-trick steals SC Bengaluru's victory in I-League 2

BENGALURU, DHNS

SC Bengaluru succumbed to their first loss of the season as the former champions went down 3-5 in a thriller to visiting NEROCA FC in I-League 2 at the Dravid-Padukone CoE here on Saturday.

NEROCA, who appeared a much-improved side that went down 2-0 to FC Bengaluru United (FCBU) last week at the same venue, won the goalfest through a hat-trick from Phijam Sanathoi Meetei (2nd, 13th, 90+2nd minute) and a brace from substitute forward Alocious M (81st, 88th).

SCB were inching towards win till the 80th minute before Alocious scored two quick goals. The No. 9 headed from a corner to equalise first and then poked in the leading goal from close range following a set-up by Phijam.

Earlier, Devadath S (35th) Abhishek Powar (45+2nd) put SCB ahead by the end of the first half after NEROCA scored thrice, including an own goal Nongmeikapam Sanathoi, in the first 13 minutes.

The result lifted NEROCA (4 points from 5 games) one place above the sole relegation spot while SCB (5 from 4) dropped to sixth behind FCBU on goal difference.

Both SCB and FCBU will play their next matches on April 27 (Monday) as the former hosts Assam's Karbi Anglong Morning Star while FCBU visit Sudeva Delhi.

Result: SCB: 3 (Nongmeikapam Sanathoi 12th OG, Devadath S 35th, Abhishek Powar 45+2nd) lt to NEROCA: 5 (Phijam Sanathoi Meetei 2nd, 13th, 90+2nd, Alocious M 81st, 88th).

Atiqa finishes historic second in WSK Italy

LONATO (ITALY), PTI: Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir keeps scaling new heights and on this occasion, the 11-year-old racer recorded the highest-ever race finish by an Indian in her category at World Series Karting (WSK) with a stellar P2 in Race 1 here.

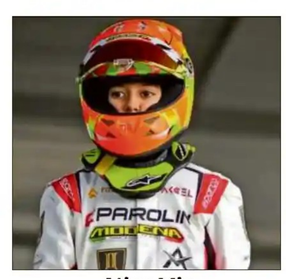
Atiqa, the first Indian to be supported by Formula 1 Academy and the highest-ranked female worldwide in the OKNJ category (age 12-14), showed scorching speed in the opening race of WSK Euro Series Round 2 at the South Garda Karting here.

This was also the second time ever that a female finished P2 in a race in OKNJ class at WSK.

Atiqa has been turning heads with the sheer weight of her performances on the European circuit and this weekend among the spectators in Lonato were Mercedes F1 boss Toto Wolff and their star driver George Russell.

Atiqa hit her straps from the get go, finishing P2 in the warmup. In qualifying, she was a contender for pole position but missed the all important slipstream, usually worth 2 tenths of a second. Despite that, she finished fourth fastest in her group and only a 10th of a second behind the pole sitter.

The highlight of Atiqa's weekend was unarguably Race 1 where she finished P2. She displayed strong racecraft and speed while battling the best drivers in the world. She missed P1 by only 8 tenths of a second.



Atiqa Mir

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*₹ 10.99 lakh for e VITARA Delta. Battery EMI: ₹ 3.99/km (subject to financier terms). Taxes and statutory charges are extra. Visit dealership for full T&Cs. | *As certified by Kantar IMRB for an OEM platform for end-to-end usage as on November 28, 2025. | *543 km range: Certified range; actual results may vary by driving conditions and usage. | *ADAS features are for driver assistance only. Driver is responsible for safe and attentive driving. | *Always wear your seatbelt. | *Mentioned ownership plan is for e VITARA Delta variant. Calculation is done assuming vehicle is running 60 km per day, excluding charging cost. Valid on retail sales for the e VITARA till 30th April '26, capped at 1 000 units of electricity (kWh) per customer or 1 Year from the purchase of the vehicle, whichever is earlier. Assured buyback plan is available on payment basis with the option of 3 years/45 000 km or 4 years/60 000 km ownership plans (whichever is earlier). The program is offered through an Insurance company. e VITARA comes with standard warranty of 3 years/1 00 000 km with an option of extending the same on payment basis to 5 years/1 40 000 km and service activated coverage for 6th to 8th year for EV related components.

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